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Lutheran Synod Quarterly

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Foreword

By: Pres. Wilhelm Petersen

In this issue of the *Quarterly* we are pleased to share with our readers the 1993 Reformation Lectures, delivered on October 28-29, at the Ylvisaker Fine Arts Center located on the campus of Bethany Lutheran College. These annual lectures are sponsored by Bethany Lutheran College and Bethany Lutheran Theological Seminary.

The lectures were delivered by Dr. Robert Kolb, professor of History and Religion at Concordia College, St. Paul, Minnesota. His general theme was "Learning to Drink from the Fountains of Israel," and in keeping with the Reformation theme Dr. Kolb ably and interestingly shows how Luther influenced his students, one in particular of whom we know very little, namely Cyriakus Spangenberg. Dr. Kolb's research has uncovered interesting insights into Luther as a student of the Bible and how he influenced his students.

Lecture I shows how Spangenberg learned hermeneutics, the art of interpretation, from his professor. Lecture II is a summary of Spangenberg's commentary of Romans 8 and 9 which reveals Luther's understanding and appreciation of eternal predestination and God's election of grace. Lecture III gives an interesting insight into parish life and pastoral care in Luther's day. Cyriakus Spangenberg learned well from his mentor, Martin Luther.

The reactors to the lectures were Professor John Brenner, professor of Church History and Education at Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary, Mequon, Wisconsin, and Professor Juul Madson, professor of New Testament at Bethany Lutheran Theological Seminary. Their reactions are also included in this issue.

"Interesting, instructive, and edifying" is how one of the reactors described these lectures. We trust that our readers will share that summation!

Learning to Drink from the Fountains of Israel

Cyriakus Spangenberg Learns Hermeneutics from Luther

By: Dr. Robert Kolb

As he looked back upon his theological training at the University of Wittenberg in 1538-41 and 1544-46, Johannes Wigand recalled five of the most precious gifts which the man who had stood at the center of that experience, Martin Luther, had given the church. Three of these gifts arose from Luther's calling to be a teacher of the Bible. In addition to his catechisms and to the polemical writings against foes of the gospel, Wigand listed Luther's translation of the Scriptures into German, his interpretations of the chief books of the Scriptures, and his postils, or sermons on the pericopes of the Scriptures.¹ As a teacher of the Biblical message, Martin Luther, doctor of the Bible, had made a profound impact on his students.

Student Reflections on Luther as Teacher of the Bible

Cyriakus Spangenberg had been Wigand's contemporary among the students at Wittenberg (1542-1550). As he heard Luther in the lecture hall and chatted with him at table, he came to believe that Luther had been the "greatest and most important prophet which the world has had since the time of the apostles, whom more than any other teacher since that time God made to resemble the prophets of the Old Testament." Spangenberg cited several older contemporaries to support his contention that Luther had been the best interpreter of Scripture ever.² Spangenberg had his own list of Luther's contributions for which he was thankful. Among them, too, were

Luther's translation of the "beloved prophets' and apostles' writings," "clearer and more understandable than in the Greek [Septuagint] and Latin translations." Spangenberg also cited Luther's guidance for applying the biblical message according to the proper distinction of law and gospel and his treatment of all the topics of biblical teaching among his greatest contributions to the church.³

Johannes Mathesius had studied at Wittenberg during three separate periods between 1529 and 1545. In his homiletical biography of Luther he recalled his first experience at Wittenberg. Mathesius reminds us that Luther was not the only instructor in biblical studies at the university at his time and that others contributed a good deal to the learning of the students. He also reminds us that Luther's influence on his students came not only through his formal lectures.

"With joy," Mathesius recalled the first sermon which he had heard Luther preach upon his arrival in Wittenberg. The entire year thereafter he was able to hear "many instructional and comforting sermons and lectures in both [the town] church and at the university." When he first arrived, the pastor of the town congregation in Wittenberg, Johann Bugenhagen, was away, aiding some city or principality in organizing its own Reformation, as was often the case. Luther took his place in the pulpit three or four times a week, at that time preaching on the Sunday gospel lessons and then on John's Gospel and Exodus 19 and 20. "On the day of Saint James, he applied the legend of Saint Christopher tenderly to all preachers of the word and to all Christian people, who carry Jesus Christ in their hearts and on their arms and who guard their consciences, help others, and through doing so earn the ingratitude of the world and false brethren." In the following weeks Mathesius heard Luther lecture on Isaiah 45-66: "I often came back from those lectures filled with comfort and joy."⁴

But Mathesius freely acknowledged that his instruction at Wittenberg came from others as well. Professor Justus Jonas and three deacons, Georg Rörer, Johann Mantel, and Sebastian Froschel, were offering lectures on the catechism at the time at which he

arrived. He heard Philip Melancthon, "that faithful and diligent professor," lecture on Cicero's treatise *On Oratory*, on dialectic and rhetoric, on the epistle to the Romans, and on Aristotle's *Ethics*. Bugenhagen was offering lectures on Paul's epistles to the Corinthians when he was in Wittenberg, and Jonas also lectured on selected Psalms. Matthaeus Aurogallus gave instruction in Hebrew grammar and was lecturing on Psalm 119. Franz von Weimar taught Greek, and a number of younger masters taught assorted courses in the liberal arts. It was a period of "peace and harmony between students and the citizens of the town," Mathesius recalled, and the instructors were not engaged in public dispute. Those were the days, Mathesius believed.⁵

Luther was older and wearier when Mathesius heard him conclude his decade long treatment of Genesis, fifteen years after Mathesius first came to Wittenberg. As he traced Moses' prophecies, Luther had prescribed to his students "the Son of God speaking so clearly," and he had demonstrated how they should protect and defend themselves with the books of Moses against all the gates of hell. He had shown how a teacher of God's word with the cross of his responsibilities and the head of the household with his responsibilities should find comfort in that word and in the examples and severe spiritual struggles of the patriarchs. He had also shown his hearers how to cultivate patience and long-suffering. Luther had continued to preach even though he was often weak as he mounted the pulpit and occasionally had to leave it before he had finished his sermons. Nonetheless, Mathesius' memories of his mentor in that year before his death exhibit his fondness for the man who had profoundly shaped the way he proclaimed the biblical message.⁶

Luther's Engagement with the Scripture

Luther himself had begun his encounter with Scripture when he had first started to learn portions of it by heart, such as the Lord's Prayer and the Decalogue, along with other parts of the medieval

catechism in grammar school in his home village of Mansfeld. With the other boys in the school he learned psalms for singing in the liturgy. As his schooling advanced, in Magdeburg and Eisenach, he heard and learned more of the Scripture and may have indeed laid eyes on the entire Bible for the first time. At the time he entered the University of Erfurt and lived in the "bursa" of Saint George there, portions of Scripture were being read daily during meals to the students. When he became a monk, in 1505, he received his own copy of the Bible, in Latin, the language of the church, bound, he later recalled, in red leather. As he lived out the daily routine of the monk, and as he studied at the university, he was immersed more and more in the Scriptures.⁷

Luther's Career as "Doctor in Biblia"

The course of his education led Luther finally to receive his degree as "doctor in Bible" in 1512, and the next year he began lecturing on the text of the Psalms. He turned to the work of a leader in the revival of Hebrew studies, Johannes Reuchlin, employing both his grammar and dictionary and his commentary on the penitential psalms in preparing lectures. When Luther turned to the New Testament, first to Romans and then to Galatians and Hebrews, in the years between 1515 and 1518, he employed the first printed edition of the Greek text, published in 1516 by Desiderius Erasmus of Rotterdam, and he also relied on Erasmus's *Paraphrases* for assistance in developing his own commentary. By the time he began to translate the Bible into German, he had an intimate familiarity with it and a working knowledge of the best of contemporary scholarship. As he concluded the lectures on Hebrews, Luther was embroiled in the dispute over his Ninety-five Theses, and his career as a public reformer had begun.

He returned to the Psalms in mid 1518 and had gotten as far as Psalm 22 in March 1521, when his academic career suffered an interruption as he was summoned to the imperial diet in Worms and then held in protective custody at the Wartburg until early 1522. Thereafter, for almost a year, so many assignments outside his formal scholarly calling came his way that he found no time to resume his

lectures on the Scriptures. In February 1523 he began an informal discussion of Deuteronomy with students. It lasted over a year. Not until May of 1524 did he resume official lectures at the university. For nearly two years he lectured on the minor prophets, at the same time he was working on translating this portion of Scripture. Ecclesiastes commanded his attention in lectures given during the summer and autumn of 1526. During 1527 plague threatened Wittenberg, and the students and most faculty members moved to the town of Jena, but Luther remained at home. For those students who also remained, he offered a brief lecture series on John's first epistle, another, month-long series on Titus, and a quickie course on Philemon in December 1527. Early 1528 saw him giving lectures on First Timothy, after which he turned to Isaiah, completing his lectures on the prophet in February 1530. Lectures on the Song of Solomon followed, interrupted by his sojourn at the Coburg during the Diet of Augsburg and perhaps also by an illness. From July to December 1531 he lectured on Galatians again, producing, in its edited form, one of the most significant works of his entire career. He returned again to the Psalms, lecturing on selected psalms (including Psalms 2, 51, 45, 120-134, and 90). His final lectures treated Genesis and lasted, with interruptions, for a decade. Among the interruptions were lectures on Isaiah 9 and on Isaiah 53 in early 1544. He concluded his studies of Genesis on November 17, 1545, just three months before his death.⁸

Many students heard Luther's lectures, but these students constituted only a small percentage of those whose theology was shaped by the material he presented, for particularly in his later years his lectures were subsequently published in one form or another. Scholars dispute the reliability, for instance, of the published version of his Genesis lectures,⁹ because of the role in which student impressions and mindset could play in the refashioning of notes into finished, publishable text. Whatever the extent to which Luther survived his editors in these published commentaries, such as those on Galatians and Genesis, those who knew him and had heard him did

accept the printed versions as Luther's works and referred to them with reverence and even awe.

• **Luther's Place among the "Commentators"**

In oral and in written form Luther's lectures fit into a long history of medieval exegesis of the Biblical text. He heard the Bible exposed largely by those who employed the form of gloss and scholion to lead students into the text, and he began his own lectures on the psalms offering glosses and scholia. The gloss was a brief explanation of the grammar or philological roots of a word or a phrase. Students usually took such glosses by dictation, copying them into their wide-margined copies of the text. Scholia were wider interpretations in which the instructor analyzed phrases, paragraphs, or ideas in the text. Luther moved away from this traditional form of instruction toward a narrative lecture which had a good many homiletical elements about it by the end of the 1510s. In this form he traced through verse by verse the course of the author's argument, with frequent digressions on subjects more or less related to the text.

Scholars are in the midst of a discussion of the nature of biblical commentary. Gerhard Lohfink distinguishes "commentary" from the glosses or scholia which do not treat the inner connection between parts of a text but rather focus only on a word or verse at hand. He distinguishes "commentary" also from the midrash, which uses the text as a mnemonic device for the tradition, and from a homily, which treats the text in the context of an appeal to an audience. "Commentary," for Lohfink, offers the reader or hearer a continuous exposition of the text within the academic setting.¹⁰ Timothy Wengert suggests that what Lohfink is describing might be called "classroom teaching aids." Wengert offers some worthwhile refinements to Lohfink's analysis. The boundaries between the forms of commentary, homily, midrash, and gloss and scholion are not so well-defined as the scholar might like. Much of medieval comment on the biblical text occurred in what was occasionally called "commentaries" (usually in the plural), but also in works labeled annotations, narrations, paraphrases, and the like. Wengert also makes the very important

point that commentaries are "self-aware." He comments, "To pick up almost any biblical commentary from any point in the history of the Church is to find oneself in the middle of a conversation or, sometimes, an argument between the commentator and his predecessors. Not only does an author show his awareness of past discussion of a word, verse or chapter, but he almost invariably reacts to this tradition. Thus, a commentary reveals interaction not merely between an interpreter and a sacred text, but also between the present interpreter and his predecessors."¹¹

This description fits what Luther came to give his students. But Kenneth Hagen suggests further refinement to our understanding of Luther's academic lectures, his "commentaries." Hagen distinguishes three forms of commentary. Original medieval commentary, according to Hagen, was the study of the sacred page. The page of Scripture was the word of God; it bore the imprint of God just as did the tablets of stone carved by the fingernails of God. The word flowed outward from the page through the theologian who was exposing that word. With the advent of scholastic theology the direction changed; the theologian approached the Scriptures on a quest to find answers to his questions. The discipline of faith seeking understanding posed the question, used logic to distinguish the parts and conditions of question and answer, and then came to the conclusions. Hagen labels this process sacred doctrine or teaching. The Renaissance humanists introduced a third form of biblical commentary as they brought to the Scriptures their interest in ancient literature and their methods of analyzing its forms and arguments. For Hagen this approach to biblical commentary is that of the sacred letter.¹²

Hagen believes that Philip Melanchthon practiced the study of the sacred letter in his Biblical exegesis, in contrast to Luther's reverting to the sacred page. He cites the prefaces to Luther's 1519 Galatians commentary in support of his argument. Melanchthon's preface praised what he called "Luther's commentary" because of its treatment of the doctrine of justification. Luther, however, in his preface, stated that the work "is not so much a commentary as a testimony of my

faith in Christ, lest perhaps I have run in vain and have not adequately grasped Paul's meaning (Gal. 2:2). For here, because it is God's affair and surely of the utmost importance, I am eager to be instructed by any child."¹³

However Luther viewed his lectures in spoken and in printed form, biblical exegesis was of utmost importance to his new reform movement. Following his production of a New Testament in German and postils to aid the priests in preaching to the common people, Luther was concerned about providing those pastors with other tools for biblical study. According to Timothy Wengert, he, Melanchthon, and Georg Spalatin set about creating "an appropriate 'scaffold' for interpreting the New Testament." The program began with the publication of Melanchthon's lectures on Romans and First and Second Corinthians in October 1522. In somewhat haphazard fashion, encouraged by Luther's preface to the former work, Melanchthon's commentaries on Matthew and John appeared soon afterward, first in the form of unauthorized publication of student notes and subsequently in the form of Melanchthon's own notes, which Luther surreptitiously "borrowed" from his friend. Melanchthon then supervised the reissuing of Luther's Galatians commentary, and Spalatin commissioned the Franciscan Francis Lambert, who was active in reform in Hesse, to publish his lectures on Luke (and perhaps Acts). Another Wittenberg colleague, Justus Jonas, did publish a commentary on Acts in 1524, and still another colleague, Johannes Bugenhagen, found a pirated copy of his notes on the rest of the Pauline epistles, from Ephesians through Hebrews, in print. He promptly found another printer to publish an authorized version of those lectures. Another of Luther's followers at the time, Johannes Oecolampadius of Basel, published a commentary of First John, and Luther himself had his sermons on First and Second Peter and Jude, given in 1522 and 1523, printed, completing what Wengert calls "the Wittenberg Commentary."¹⁴

Martin Luther, Exegete

Often it is said that Luther's great contributions to biblical study came in his break with the four-fold method of interpretation which most Western biblical scholars had employed throughout the Middle Ages. The Platonic spiritualizing of certain circles in the early church had taken over the approach to Scripture which we usually label "allegory" from contemporary Jewish scholars, heirs of Plato who had discarded the traditional Old Testament understanding of Jahweh as the God of history. In the first half of the third century Origen had pioneered allegorical interpretations of the Bible for the Christian church. Augustine counted four senses of Scripture, historical, allegorical, analogical, and aetiological. By these terms he meant the actual events or ideas recorded in the text, the figurative understanding of the text, the congruence between Old and New Testaments, and the causes of that which the text recorded. John Cassian, a generation later, formalized the scheme of a four-fold method of biblical interpretation. It was founded on the literal sense of the text, and figurative interpretations of texts all had to find their doctrinal basis in some literal interpretation of another passage. But passages which seemed to say little or nothing of spiritual importance could be interpreted at one or more of the other three levels to find some deeper meaning. The allegorical sense revealed matters doctrinal, particularly those pertaining to Christ and to the church militant. The tropological sense revealed moral wisdom. The anagogical sense revealed what is to come, the church triumphant, matters of eschatology.¹⁵

Luther worked his way slowly away from the four-fold approach to Scripture during the 1510s. He turned to an emphasis on a "literal" interpretation of the Scriptures which appreciated the action of God in human history, even when it seemed spiritually insignificant. He found meaning even in God's interaction with human creatures in very simple, lowly, and earthly terms. At the same time he included in his "literal" sense the "prophetic" sense of those Old Testament passages which he believed pointed to Christ.¹⁶

The most significant revolution in biblical studies which took place at Wittenberg was instead that reorientation of the searching of the Scriptures to focus above all on Jesus Christ. Some scholars have labeled this a tropological approach. It is the opposite of a concern with human moral performance, the usual subject of the medieval tropology. However, it does focus on the application of the text to the hearer's life, for Luther never considered Christ apart from his relationship to the sinner, to the believer. Because this impact upon the believer's life is paramount in Luther's treatment of the text, scholars often refer to the proper distinction of law and gospel as the key to Luther's interpretation. Christ, he believed, is to be found throughout both Old and New Testament, in the former in the form of promise, in the latter in his revelation through his incarnation. In both the prophetic promise and the incarnation in the flesh God has dealt with his people in the same way, exhibiting wrath against the sin which has alienated his human creatures from himself, and exhibiting his mercy toward those whom he has chosen as his children.¹⁷

Luther could even use allegory to point his students and their future hearers to Christ if it served the purpose. His students heard him elaborate on a figure as he commented on Genesis 6:16 and then apply the story of Noah "to the body of Christ, that is, to the church, which has an entrance, namely Baptism, through which the clean and the unclean enter without distinction. Even though the church is small, it is nevertheless the ruler of the world; and the world is preserved on its account, in the same way as the unclean animals were preserved in the ark. Others have applied them also to the body of Christ, which had a wound in its side, just as the ark had a window." Then Luther concluded, "These allegories, if not actually scholarly, are nevertheless harmless, inasmuch as they contain no errors; and one may use them except in debates for the sake of embellishment."¹⁸

Generally, Luther's engagement with the task was more sober. He strove to convey the intention of the writer. In doing so his students were often treated to extensive linguistic and grammatical analysis of a word or phrase, fashioned with the aid of the best lexical and

grammatical aids of the day.¹⁹ Because he believed that the Bible is a unit, he cited other biblical references, from within the same book or same author's corpus, and from all other corners of the Scriptures, to illuminate a given passage. Students were led to think of the Bible as a whole and to search for connecting links between its parts, its individual books.

Luther was also well aware of the literary dimensions of biblical writing. With a good command of classical rhetorical theory, Luther came to the biblical text with certain standards or views of literary quality fixed in his mind. He compared the drama of Job to the comedies of Terence, and he believed that its "vigorous and splendid" language exhibited the touch of a skilled dramatist, most likely Solomon, in its retelling of Job's story. He believed that Isaiah expressed himself "with more temperament than Jeremiah." He found Asaph's poetry obscure, Solomon's skillfully composed and "rich in vocabulary," David's "of an Attic delicacy." Bornkamm concludes that for Luther "David alone came close to the apex of Old Testament writers, namely to the simple, magnificent style in the books of Moses."²⁰

Luther took seriously the story element of the history recorded in Genesis, for example, and used the lives of the patriarchs as what Heinrich Bornkamm has labeled "a mirror of life." He loved to tell a story, and his imagination embellished the biblical narrative in Genesis with sprightly tales of marital life, social conflict, political intrigues. He did not presume that the forms of political and social life were exactly the same in his own Germany as they had been in ancient Israel, but he did presume that the human dimensions and dynamics of daily life had not changed. And, as Bornkamm observes, "he was very much at home [in the Old Testament world] because it was a peasant world with many characteristics which he knew full well. It had breadth of scope and varied folk life and genuine folk religion." Therefore, Luther made the most of its examples, warnings, and admonitions. Old Testament personalities became models and foils for his own proclamation of law and gospel to his people. Throughout his

analysis of the everyday faiths and the daily lives of Old Testament people Luther used the medieval view that society is structured in three estates or hierarchy—family life, political life, and religious life. From this vantage point he commented on the movement of nations and the problems and trials of everyday living in his own world.²¹

In interpreting the Scriptures Luther was indeed in conversation with the commentators of the past, although not as often does this conversation reveal itself in his lectures as it does in those of others, including Melancthon. The fathers of the ancient church guided his interpretation of the text in some passages, and in others he consciously diverged from their interpretations. He knew the biblical interpretations found in medieval preachers and commentators, including his favorite, Bernhard of Clairvaux, and Jean Gerson. He was familiar with the commentary of the fourteenth century Franciscan exegete, Nicolaus of Lyra and his fifteenth century successor, Paul of Burgos, both of whom advanced the use of Hebrew and Rabbinic sources in biblical exegesis. It may not be true that "if Lyra had not played the lyre, Luther would not have danced," but Luther's students heard Nicolaus quoted sufficiently to know that they, too, should pay attention to his works.

Luther's lectures took form in a narrative discussion of the text. He often digressed. One of my favorites among these side trips is his extensive discussion of predestination in connection with Genesis 26:9. The text presents Isaac's denial to Abimelech that Rebecca was his wife. From that Luther strayed into a discussion of God's choosing of those whom he would make to be his own children. His warning against curious inquiry into the secret counsels of God and his admonition to cling to the revealed God with a firm faith reflect the core of his theology of grace and his theology of the cross. But his remarks have nothing to do with the text.²²

Occasionally such digressions, as well as direct comment on the text, led Luther into polemic against his opponents. He firmly believed that teaching the faith includes teaching about those elements which threaten it in the lives of the hearers of the word. Therefore, he

seldom avoided the compulsion to apply a text to the threats to the faith which were abroad in his world, from adherents of the papacy, sacramentarians, Anabaptists, and others who undermined the gospel which he was proclaiming and teaching.

Melanchthon's Influence on Wittenberg Exegesis

Luther was, of course, not the only influence on the way in which later Lutherans studied the Bible. Alongside him stood a number of other professors, the most significant of whom was Philip Melanchthon. Wunderkind at the time of his arrival in Wittenberg, at age 21, in 1518, Melanchthon had already mastered Greek and had already won a reputation among other humanist scholars of his day. He plunged into teaching courses in the undergraduate program in the liberal arts, but in 1526 the university called him to be professor of theology as well. Even before this he had lectured on Romans, and he continued throughout most of his life to offer lectures, both formal and informal, on biblical books.²³

Luther and Melanchthon almost immediately recognized in each other a valuable academic comrade and colleague. After his arrival in Wittenberg in 1518, the younger man had rapidly absorbed much of what Luther was teaching. Therefore, much of what can be said about the guiding principles of Luther's approach to biblical interpretation can be said of Melanchthon as well. His interpretation centered in the concern to proclaim Christ, to proclaim repentance and forgiveness of sins in his name. Melanchthon also used the principle of distinguishing law and gospel as his key methodological tool.²⁴

Melanchthon's special contribution to students such as Mathesius, Wigand, and Spangenberg lies in his application of the principles of rhetoric and dialectic to the study of the Scriptures. These principles lay at the service of the proclamation of Christ and the continual distinguishing of law and gospel, but as is always the case with method, it influenced the presentation of the biblical message to a

great degree. As an undergraduate instructor, Melanchthon found it necessary to produce textbooks in both rhetoric and logic for his students, and he continued to refine these basic tools for training them in effective learned discourse throughout his life. He also used them as he approached the biblical text, according to Wengert, in three ways. First he assumed that the biblical writers and Jesus himself used rhetorical techniques which the exegete must analyze. Second, he used rhetorical and logical principles to define and organize the central meaning of the text. He was not much interested in peripheral matters which might be raised by individual words or phrases; he insisted on pursuing the writer's basic concerns, the message which they wanted to convey. Third, Melanchthon employed the principles of logic and rhetoric to fashion effective application of the meaning of the text to the lives of his hearers and readers. All three of these categories came together in Melanchthon's commenting on the biblical text "to provide students with a scaffold, or index, of the biblical text, in which the clarity and certainty of the word are preserved for them in their quest for true 'cognitio Dei.'"²⁵

At the heart of Melanchthon's organization of the text stood the task of determining its purpose or goal and the topics it treats. He trained his students to seek the "scopus," or "summa" of a text. The scopus or summa sets forth the goal of the writer in the particular passage. The status, sometimes called the "caput," poses the specific question, the "hypothesis," of a text.²⁶ In treating such individual passages the interpreter must also keep in mind the "argumentum" of the entire book, its framework and goal.

Having established the purpose of the writer in the particular chapter or passage under study, Melanchthon's students were instructed to find its "topics" or "commonplaces." Renaissance biblical humanism had made much of finding the topics by which orators could organize their materials. The commonplaces were like designated notecards, on which the debater might put down a number of sources from which to draw materials for presentation. Melanchthon refined and further developed the concept for use in

theology, as well as in other academic disciplines. Siegfried Wiedenhofer classifies Melanchthon's use of the term "commonplaces," or loci communes into three categories: These loci or topics could be "storehouses for arguments to be used in oratory," a usage which does not apply to Melanchthon's exegetical work. Second, topics or loci could be general categories within a speech or text, or third, "the basic principles of content which stand behind a speech or text."²⁷ In the latter senses Melanchthon used the concept of the topics of the text to guide biblical interpretation. The foremost task of the preacher or exegete was to find the topics which the biblical author had been treating and to explicate them clearly and effectively for the hearer. Some see this development of biblical interpretation in the form of teachable topics as a step on the road to a rigid orthodoxy, but at least in intention it grew out of a concern for effective teaching and application of the text to the lives of the people of God.

The Instruments of the Art of Using the Scriptures: Cyriakus Spangenberg's Hermeneutics for the Epistle to the Romans

The interaction between proclaimer and hearer formed the focal point of biblical studies at Wittenberg. God's word was proclaimed so that its hearers might be drawn by the Holy Spirit's power into faith in Jesus Christ. Luther translated the Scriptures so that the Holy Spirit's access to German sinners might be direct. He preached to call sinners to repentance and to console them with God's promise of forgiveness of sins in Jesus Christ. He lectured on the Scriptures and published his lectures so that the preachers of the church might do the same. Mathesius, Wigand, and Spangenberg had been trained to be sons of the prophets, agents of the word of the Lord. In Spangenberg's exegetical work the influences of Luther are not hard to trace.

Particularly in an outline of his hermeneutics, with which he introduces his commentary on Paul's letter to the Romans, that influence is clear.

Spangenberg had many ways to describe the epistle to the Romans. He called it a light; a pharmacy and herbal bath; a reliable and well-marked path; a fortress and castle; a fountain with fresh flowing, refreshing water; a fine banquet hall; a well-supplied wardrobe; a magnificent, well-stocked armor chamber; beloved David's slingshot, with a smooth stone in it for Goliath, the papacy; a table already set with food; a wonderful garden with flowers and fruit; a health giving mineral bath which combats all infirmities; and a sleeping chamber for which we long. Spangenberg believed that the epistle was the door and key to the whole of the Bible.²⁸

Spangenberg also believed that there was a key and door to the book itself. In the third of his sixty-two sermons on the first eight chapters of Romans (the first presenting the apostle's career and the value of this particular epistle, the second summarizing the argument and content of the book chapter by chapter) Spangenberg set out to teach his readers the "vocabula artis," the terms which are the instruments for the reader to use in the art of interpreting the epistle and giving proper instruction from it.²⁹ In establishing his hermeneutic for the reading of Romans, Spangenberg implicitly set forth a method of interpreting all of Paul's letters, if not the whole of Scripture. He had learned from Melanchthon to regard this epistle as the point of orientation from which to explicate the entire Bible.³⁰ In formulating his hermeneutical principles for his exposition of Romans, Spangenberg reveals much about how Luther's and Melanchthon's students believed the Bible should be interpreted.

His basis for interpretation rested upon five sets of terms: "what, in relation to one another, are" law and gospel, sin and righteousness, grace and gift, faith and works, flesh and spirit.³¹ There can be little doubt where Spangenberg had learned to read the epistle in this way. In Luther's preface to Romans, which Spangenberg may well have heard read at his parents' table before he could even read himself, the

reformer had stated, "To begin with we must have knowledge of its [the epistle's] language and know what St. Paul means by the words: 'law,' 'grace,' 'faith,' 'righteousness,' 'flesh,' 'spirit,' and the like. Otherwise, no reading of the book has any value."³² Spangenberg took Luther's point and augmented it by organizing Luther's terms into pairs which could be distinguished and contrasted to make clear the meaning of each. Undoubtedly, Spangenberg also had had much recourse to Melancthon's commentary on Romans and its introductory summary of the "argument" which Paul pursues. The direct influence of this section of Melancthon's commentary on Spangenberg's hermeneutic is more difficult to establish, however, even though Melancthon's focus on law and faith finds parallels (but not direct citation) in Spangenberg's hermeneutical discussion.³³

• **Law and Gospel**

In defining the term "law" Spangenberg followed Luther in emphasizing that "doing the works of the law and fulfilling the law are two very different things."³⁴ External observance of either God's commands or human commands is not a sufficient or genuine keeping of the law although it may constitute piety in the world's eyes. Paul taught, however, that God's law, "his eternal, unchangeable will,"³⁵ issues demands regarding every detail of human life. The law is strict and severe; it condemns and curses everyone who does not obey its stringent commands perfectly and completely, with heart, desire, and deed. Spangenberg concluded his discussion of the law with a paraphrase of Luther's conclusion of his definition of "law" in the Romans preface: to fulfill the law is to do the works of the law and live a godly life with desire and delight, to live according to it freely, without the law's coercion, as if there were neither law nor punishment. That cannot happen except through the Holy Spirit, who is not given except in, with, and through faith in Jesus Christ's death and resurrection on our behalf, as Paul emphasizes repeatedly. Without this understanding of Paul's definition of the term "law" the reader will fall into great error in reading the epistle, Spangenberg was certain.³⁶

The proper distinction of law and gospel is *the* hermeneutical key to Romans, according to Melancthon. Luther did not contrast gospel with law in his preface to Romans. For Spangenberg this distinction is the first of his five distinctions and, in actual use, the most important. He defined "gospel" in contrast to "law:" "Gospel is, in contrast, a joyous message, a happy cry and delightful news, spread abroad throughout the whole world by the dear apostles, regarding the true David, Jesus Christ, regarding how he has taken on the great Goliath, the devil, with all his crowd, death, sin, and hell, and has made all those who were held captive in sin by the law's judgment, were subjected to death, and overcome by the devil free, unencumbered, and acquitted, righteous and saved, without any merit or action of their own, so that they might rightly thank and serve God with joy in all good things. Indeed, the gospel is a delightful proclamation of comfort, in which nothing but sheer joy and gladness are proclaimed and offered to us, in Christ Jesus, our Lord. It is not merely a proclamation in words, but it is the power of God which saves all those who believe it."³⁷

Spangenberg developed five contrasting points which help clarify the relationship of law and gospel for his readers. First, the law was planted in human hearts by nature (Rom. 1 and 2). Nature does not know the gospel, which God reveals through Christ (Matt. 11:25, 13:11). Second, Moses delivered the law; the gospel comes through Jesus Christ. Third, the law's promises are conditional on human obedience to it. Completely unconditional are the promises on which the gospel rests, "that God, for Christ's sake and purely without merit and action on our part, wants to bestow forgiveness of sins and life, out of his grace, to all who trust in Christ (Rom. 3)." Fourth, the law arouses wrath, terrifies the conscience, and threatens eternal damnation (Rom. 4:15). The gospel is the power of God which saves all those who believe. The law effects terror, wrath, and death; the gospel peace, joy, and life. The law brings the curse; the gospel brings blessing. Finally, the law only demands and commands; the gospel gives, comforts, and delivers the best and highest gifts. Spangenberg

concluded his treatment of this distinction by noting that both law and gospel went beyond the text of Luther's preface to Romans, but it incorporated an important element of his mentor's interpretive method. This use of the proper distinction of law and gospel shaped the exegetical writings of many others who had studied with Spangenberg at Wittenberg.

Sin and Righteousness

Spangenberg's other sets of distinctions did not become fundamental principles of biblical exegesis among Lutheran exegetes even though these distinctions contained concepts which were vital in their scriptural interpretation and instruction. The second distinction was that between sin and righteousness. Spangenberg's definition of law anticipated his definition of sin. Again in close parallel to Luther's preface to Romans, he defined sin not merely as outward actions but above all as that which is so entrenched in our flesh and blood and has so corrupted our nature that we cannot do anything on our own but sin. The root and fountain of all sins is unbelief in the heart. All other sins arise from it. Spangenberg expanded extensively on this core concept from Luther's preface, and he retained the contrast which Luther briefly drew between sin and true righteousness, which is the righteousness of faith in Christ.³⁸

Spangenberg continued on, with a detailed development of Paul's definition of righteousness. It is not based upon an outwardly correct and honorable life, as the philosophers had taught, Spangenberg emphasized, nor was it the righteousness of keeping the commandments of God. Even less could it be the righteousness of the Jewish ceremonial and political laws, which are found in the Old Testament. All such righteousness consists of human action. The Christian righteousness of which Paul speaks consists instead in our standing still and permitting God to do good to us. Righteousness in God's sight consists in God's not reckoning our sins to us but forgiving them for Christ's sake; it consists in God's giving us Christ's merit and obedience in word and sacrament. This righteousness is the righteousness of faith, Spangenberg continued, paraphrasing Luther's

brief definition in his Romans preface at this point. This faith makes believers desire to do God's will and fulfill their obligations to others. This faith brings them to give God honor, fear, and love, and to give the neighbor help, comfort, counsel, and service. "No more than the earth can produce rain can our nature produce such righteousness by its own free will and powers. God must bestow this kind of righteousness." Thus, true righteousness is alien righteousness and is made our own and reckoned to us by grace through faith, Spangenberg concluded.³⁹ His expansion of Luther's definition of righteousness in the Romans preface faithfully reflected his mentor's theology, which emphasized the distinction between the righteousness of faith and the righteousness of the law. (He called it simply "our theology" in his Galatians lectures published in 1535.)⁴⁰ Spangenberg distinguished these two kinds of righteousness from time to time elsewhere in his commentaries on Paul's epistles.⁴¹

• **Grace and Gift**

Spangenberg's third distinction treated "grace" and "gift." "Grace means God's fatherly favor, love, and affection, which he bears for us. Through it he was moved to take us to himself and to give up his Son, Jesus Christ, for us and to pour into us his Holy Spirit with all sorts of gifts. Gift, on the other hand, is the fruit and result of grace, such as peace, joy, patience, hope, faith, love, gladness, righteousness, gentleness, chastity, understanding of the Scriptures, kindness, God's indwelling, and the like. "We should not rely on these gifts but rather accept them with thanks, recognize them, and use them well with joy." This is no more than an expanded paraphrase of Luther's treatment of these two terms in his Romans preface. Spangenberg also echoed Luther's preface when he pointed out how particularly valuable this distinction is in interpreting Romans 7, where Paul struggles with the absence of the gifts while he remains confident of the grace.⁴²

• **Faith and Works**

In his preface Luther continued with a discussion of faith, setting in place basic ideas which Spangenberg incorporated into his contrast of faith and works. Luther rejected the "human notion and illusion"

that faith is something which the hearers of the word create in their own hearts. He insisted instead that "faith is a divine work in us which changes us and makes us to be born anew of God. ... Faith is a living, daring confidence in God's grace" Spangenberg pursued his presentation in a slightly different way, but he incorporated Luther's fundamental concerns quite precisely, using Luther's own words to initiate his own discussion of these concerns.

Spangenberg began by reminding his readers that faith is "not merely knowing and holding as true the articles of the Christian faith." This concern, totally absent in Luther's comments, apparently had arisen in the Lutheran church in the intervening period. Faith includes such knowledge, but it is fundamentally "a strong trust and certain reliance on the living God and on his gracious promises, with the result that a person believes, trusts, and rests upon God's forgiving our sins for Christ's sake, and upon his truly accepting us as his children, by grace, as if we were fully righteous. Consequently, faith is a living, carefully considered confidence in God's grace, so certain that a person could die a thousand times over before doubting God's grace and turning from it," Spangenberg continued, a direct citation of Luther's Romans preface.

Spangenberg then repeated Luther's chief point word for word. "Faith is a divine work which changes us and makes us to be born anew of God, John 1. It kills the Old Adam in us and makes us altogether different people, in heart and spirit and mind and all powers, and it brings us the Holy Spirit," Spangenberg added to Luther, "who indeed effects this faith." He continued with Luther's words regarding the liveliness of faith, which produces good works without any coercion.⁴³

Spangenberg expanded his treatment of these good works in Lutheran fashion, going beyond Luther's treatment of the topic in his preface to Romans. Spangenberg distinguished three kinds of good works: "thankfulness to God, which consists of faith, confession, praise, and honor of God and his word," "love, expressed through every kind of work of mercy," and "the mortification of the Old

Adam." Spangenberg concluded his treatment of the distinction between faith and works with the mixed metaphor, "Faith is the fountain, works are the fruits. Whoever boasts of faith should demonstrate it with works."⁴⁴

• **Flesh and Spirit**

Spangenberg's final distinction was that between "flesh" and "spirit," a distinction drawn by Luther in his preface to the Romans. Again Spangenberg elaborated Luther's summary only slightly, with a minimum of paraphrase. "Flesh" should not be understood as something outward or having to do with unchastity. John 3:6 defines as flesh all that is born of flesh: "the whole human creature, with body and soul, heart, mind, spirit, will, reason, and powers, with which a person is born into the world from father and mother and lives and moves without the Spirit of God, with all his own wisdom and understanding, action and essence ..." Like Luther, Spangenberg used Galatians 5:19-21 to explain what the Pauline concept of "flesh" means.

"Spirit" means, for Paul, "the whole human creature who has been born anew through water and the Spirit, who lives and acts inwardly and outwardly in a way which serves the Spirit and the future life." This definition comes, with little alteration, from Luther's Romans preface. Spangenberg expanded, however: this life of the spirit is not found in monasteries but in daily living under God's grace and striving to do what is heavenly, spiritual, eternal, and lasting, even when it concerns the outward matters of one's daily calling in life.⁴⁵

• **The Distinctions Applied**

Spangenberg set forth a hermeneutic for reading Romans with his citations and expansions of Luther's preface to Romans. Did he use this guide for interpretation himself? His principles of interpretation do not intrude in every passage of his commentary, to be sure, but from time to time Spangenberg did explicitly remind his hearers and readers that one or another of the distinctions which he had presented in his third sermon on the epistle could be used to understand a particular passage.

He used the proper distinction of law and gospel more frequently than the other distinctions. In commenting on Romans 3:21, "But now the righteousness of God has been manifested apart from the law ...," Spangenberg insisted on the necessity of distinguishing law and gospel so that the law is not simply put in the gospel's place or held above it, or that the two not be mixed with each other, for these two teachings have completely dissimilar functions. The law commands, but the gospel shows how the commands may be kept and fulfilled. The law accuses, the gospel absolves. The law produces wrath, the gospel reconciliation and grace. The law terrifies, the gospel comforts. The law kills, the gospel makes alive. The law means doing something, the gospel trusting and believing. The law brings the curse, the gospel blessing. The law makes slaves, the gospel liberates. The law's promises have difficult conditions attached, the gospel's promises proceed freely out of grace.

Spangenberg proceeded to show how this contrast clarifies what Paul says in this passage. Melancthon had used the distinction of law and gospel to enable the readers of his commentary to understand better what Paul was saying here. Spangenberg did not cite his words directly, and he included different elements in the contrast which he drew between law and gospel. The elements in common are commonplaces of Lutheran theology, and so it is impossible to establish the degree of influence which his preceptor may have had on him here.⁴⁶

The distinction of law and gospel forms the underlying analytical instrument in Spangenberg's sermon on Romans 5:20-21, with its contrast of law and grace: "The law came in, to increase the trespass; but where sin increased, grace abounded all the more" In a manner reminiscent of Luther's dialogs recited to students in the lecture hall or standing before his people, Spangenberg rehearsed for his hearers the comedy which God stages, in which the cast of characters includes Christ, the devil, death, sin, and the human creature. The devil, assisted by sin and its stinger, death, attempts to kill the human creature and drag him off to hell. Christ comes to rescue the human creature from the devil's power and from the burden of sin and death's chains. In this drama the law plays a key role. It does not make common cause with the devil in driving the human creature into sin,

but it gives Christ no aid at all in bringing the sinner to righteousness. The law confronts sinners with their sins and forces them to recognize that they are totally corrupted and without any power to leave this corruption behind. As soon as Christ comes onto the scene, the law leaves, so that Christ can bring the matter to a joyous and blessed end. Thus, the law's function is to make sin more powerful, as a physician must sometimes make the patient feel worse before healing can begin. Spangenberg then proceeded to draw the contrast of law and gospel with lists of attributes of each similar to those which he presented in his original orientation to the book and in his comments on Romans 3. Spangenberg's treatment of the law did not follow Melancthon's at this passage in drawing contrasts between the spiritual and the political uses of the law; Spangenberg confined his treatment to the former function of the law. Other parallels between their respective descriptions of what the law does and what the gospel means occur in these passages, to be sure, but without sufficient peculiar similarities to permit a definite judgment on influence.⁴⁷

With similar comparisons and contrasts, Spangenberg used the differences between law and gospel to guide his readers into the proper understanding of Romans 6:23, "the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord." Melancthon did not comment on this verse in his 1532 commentary, and did not use the proper distinction of law and gospel explicitly in explaining the passage for his readers in 1556. Spangenberg also found no basis for his own interpretation in Luther's postil sermon on the text, which concludes the epistle lesson for the seventh Sunday after Trinity.⁴⁸ In his sermon on Romans 6:19-23, which reminds believers that they are no longer slaves of sins but are indeed free in regard to righteousness, Spangenberg made explicit use of his distinction between sin and righteousness, again without help from either Melancthon's commentary or Luther's postil.⁴⁹

Spangenberg also employed the distinction of gift and grace in treating Romans 6:23. Luther's treatment of this passage in his postil ignored his own distinction, for he equated the terms gift and grace.

But Spangenberg used the distinction in contrasting the gift of eternal life, the result of God's grace, with the grace or favor of God, the forgiveness of sins, which makes it possible for the Holy Spirit to bestow the gift.⁵⁰ He also employed this distinction in treating Romans 12:3, explaining that "the grace given" to Paul was actually a "gift," in the sense of this distinction.⁵¹

In his sermon on Romans 5:13-14 Spangenberg used the distinction of flesh and spirit to illuminate the contrast between Adam, the "type of the one who was to come," and Christ. Melancthon drew no such contrast in his commentaries.⁵² Nor did he in two places in Romans 7 where Spangenberg used this distinction. In discussing Paul's battles with his own tendency to sin, in verses 18-24, Spangenberg turned to his definitions of flesh and spirit to clarify what was going on in Paul's life as he struggled against "the flesh" "in the spirit."⁵³ Paul's text imposes upon commentators the necessity of discussing flesh and spirit at Romans 8:5-8. Melancthon did, but without any distinctive features which can be found in Spangenberg's treatment, where he used his distinction of flesh and spirit to explicate the text. He extensively developed the definitions and the contrasts which he had sketched in his hermeneutical sermon at the beginning of his commentary in the following sermons on Romans 8.⁵⁴

Conclusion

Cyriacus Spangenberg had learned from his preceptors. Although the precise impact of Melancthon's interpretation of the text of Romans cannot be ascertained in his use of the five pairs of contrasting terms which were to guide Spangenberg's hearers and readers through the epistle, Melancthon's instruction in rhetoric and dialectic had undoubtedly shaped the way in which Spangenberg thought about biblical theology. Among the lessons which Spangenberg should have learned from him was the art of comparison and contrast, one of Melancthon's many tools for clarifying

concepts.⁵⁵ Luther's dialectical thinking had undoubtedly also taught his young admirer to understand theology in terms of contrasts, especially the contrast — and, in some cases, conflict — between divine and human action.⁵⁶ Spangenberg applied this habit of thought which he had acquired at Wittenberg to the fundamental theological task of biblical interpretation. He constructed five contrasting sets of terms which helped divine what God does for the believer from what the human creature receives or does, as believer or sinner.

Spangenberg followed Luther and Melanchthon in his assessment of the function of Paul's epistle to the Romans in interpreting Scripture. He borrowed directly and without apology from Luther as he constructed his method for interpreting Romans. His basic orientation toward the text and toward Paul's thought came directly from Luther's preface to Paul's letter. That preface, as well as Paul's epistle, had become for Spangenberg a light, a reliable and well-marked path, and the door and the key to the whole Bible.

Notes

1. Johann Wigand, *Oratio de doctrina et praecipuis certiminibus Lutheri* (Jena: Günther Hüttich, 1571), (D4)r.
2. Cyriacus Spangenberg, *Die dritte Predigte von dem heiligen Gottes Manne Doctore Martino Luthero/ Sonderlich von seinem Prophetenampt.* (Erfurt: Georg Baumann, 1564), Cij^r, Eij^r-(Ev)^r.
3. Cyriacus Spangenberg, *Theander Lutherus. Von des werthen Gottes Manne Doctor Martin Luthers Geistlicher Haushaltung vnd Ritterschafft ...* (Ursel: Nicolaus Henricus, [1580]), A5r, A4r-v.
4. Johannes Mathesius, *Historien/ Von des Ehrwirdigen in Gott Seligen thewren Manns Gottes/ Doctoris Martini Luthers/ anfang/ lehr/ leben vnd sterben ...* (Nuremberg, 1566), LXXXI^r.
5. *Ibid.*, LXXXI^{r-v}; cf. CCXVI^{r-v}.
6. *Ibid.*, CLXXIX^v-CLXXXII^r.

7. J. Michael Reu, *Luther's German Bible* (Columbus, OH: Lutheran Book Concern, 1934), 75-92.

8. This synopsis of Luther's career is taken from Raeder, "Luther als Ausleger," in Helmar Junghans, ed., *Leben und Werk Martin Luthers von 1526 bis 1546. Festgabe zu seinem 500. Geburtstag* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1983), 255-257.

9. Peter Meinhold, *Die Genesisvorlesung Luthers und ihre Herausgeber* (Stuttgart: Kohlhammer, 1936). 10. Gerhard Lohfink, "Kommentar als Gattung," *Bibel und Leben* 15 (1974):1-15.

11. Timothy J. Wengert, *Philip Melancthon's Annotationes in Johannem in Relation to its Predecessors and Contemporaries* (Geneva: Droz, 1987), 17-19.

12. Kenneth Hagen, "What did the Term *Commentarius* mean to Sixteenth-Century Theologians?" in *Théorie et pratique de l'exégèse: actes du troisième colloque international sur l'histoire de l'exégèse biblique au XVI^e siècle*, ed. Irena Backus and Francis Higman (Geneva: Droz, 1990), 13-38.

13. Hagen, 31-32; *WA* 2: 449,16-19; *LW* 27:159

14. Wengert, 31-42.

15. Summarized by James Samuel Preus, *From Shadow to Promise, Old Testament Interpretation from Augustine to the Young Luther* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1969), 21-22.

16. Preus traces the development of Luther's way out of allegory toward the *sensus propheticus* in the context of the Psalms lectures of 1513-1515. The development was still in process at the end of those lectures.

17. Heinrich Bornkamm, *Luther and the Old Testament*, trans. Eric W. and Ruth C. Gritsch (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1969), 81-87.

18. *WA* 42:310; see Bornkamm, 87-96.

19. *Ibid.*, 39-44.

20. *Ibid.*, 35-36.

21. *Ibid.*, 11-44.

22. *WA* 43: 457,32-463,17; *LW* 5: 42-50.

23. Karl Hardfelder, *Philipp Melanchthon als Praeceptor Germaniae* (Berlin: Hofmann, 1889), 555-565.
24. Wengert, 151-158.
25. *Ibid.*, 169-170.
26. *Ibid.*, 183-184.
27. *Ibid.*, 183, cites Siegfried Wiedenhofer, *Formalstrukturen humanistischer und reformatorischer Theologie bei Philipp Melanchthon*, 2 vols. (Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang, 1976), 1:373-379.
28. *Ausslegung der Ersten Acht Capitel der Episteln S. Pavli an die Romer* (Strassburg: Samuel Emmel, 1566), v^r.
29. *Ibid.*, x^v.
30. See Melanchthon's "De officiis concionatoris (1529)," *Supplementa Melanchthonia V, II, Homiletische Schriften*, ed. P. Drews and F. Cohrs (Leipzig, 1929), 9,25ff. Cf. Uwe Schnell, *Die Homiletische Theorie Philippp Melanchthons* (Berlin: Lutherisches Verlagshaus, 1968), 117-119.
31. *Ausslegung der Ersten Acht Capitel*, x^v.
32. *WA, DB* 7:2 [1522],17-19, and 3 [1546],17-19; *LW* 35:366.
33. *Melanchthon's Werke in Auswahl, V. Band, Romerbrief-Kommentar 1532*, ed. Rolf Schäfer (Gutersloh: Mohn, 1965), 30-56. Cf. *CR* XV: 495-546 (1532) and 797-816 (1556).
34. *WA DB* 7:6,1-2, and 7,1-2; *LW* 35:367; cf. Spangenberg, *Ausslegung der Ersten Acht Capitel*, xj^r, a direct quotation in the midst of a discussion, x^v-xj^v.
35. This phrase is Melanchthonian rather than Luther's but does not occur in Melanchthon's definition of "law" in "Argumentum" of Romans.
36. *Ausslegung der Ersten Acht Capitel*, x^v-xj^r; cf. *WA B* 7:6,12-26, and 7,12-26; *LW* 35:368-69.
37. *Ausslegung der Ersten Acht Capitel*, xj^v.
38. *Ibid.*, xij. Cf. *WA DB* 7:6,27 - 8,9, and 7,27 - 9,9; *LW* 35:369.

39. *Ausslegung der Ersten Acht Capitel*, xij^v-xiiij^f. Cf. *WA DB* 7:10,28 - 12,4, and 11,28 - 13,4; *LW* 35:371.
40. *WA* 40,1:45; *LW* 26:7.
41. *Die erste Epistel s. Pauli an die Corinthier/Gepredigt vnd Aussgelegt ...* (Frankfurt am Main: Weygand Han and Georg Raben, 1561), LVII^f, *Ausslegung der Letsten Acht Capitel/der Episteln S. PAVLI an die Roemer* (Strassburg, 1569), C^v.
42. *Ausslegung der Ersten Acht Capitel*, xiiij^f. Cf. *WA DB* 7:10,28 - 12,4 and 11,28 - 13,4; *LW* 35:369-70.
43. *Ausslegung der Ersten Acht Capitel*, xiiij^f. Cf. *WA DB* 7:8,30 - 10,27, and 9:30 - 11,27; *LW* 35:370-71.
44. *Ausslegung der Ersten Acht Capitel*, xiiij^{r-v}.
45. *Ausslegung der Ersten Acht Capitel*, xiiij^v-xiiij^f. Cf. *WA, Bibel* 7:12,5-26, and 13,5-26; *LW* 35:371-72.
46. *Ausslegung der Ersten Acht Capitel*, xcviij^v-xcviij^f. Cf. *Melanchthons Werke*, 104-105.
47. *Ausslegung der Ersten Acht Capitel*, ccix^f-ccxij^f. Cf. *Melanchthons Werke*, 190-97.
48. *Ausslegung der Ersten Acht Capitel*, cclij^f-ccliiij^f. Cf. *Melanchthons Werke*, 216, *CR XV*: 935, and *WA* 22: 92-104. Spangenberg also used the proper distinction of law and gospel to elucidate Romans 10:12-15. *Ausslegung der Letsten Acht Capitel*, cxiiij^{r-v}.
49. *Ausslegung der Ersten Acht Capitel*, ccxxxix^f-ccxlij^f; cf. his use of this distinction also on ccliiij^f.
50. *Ausslegung der Ersten Acht Capitel*, ccxlv^vccxlvj^f.
51. *Ausslegung der Letsten Acht Capitel*, clxxx^{r-v}.
52. *Ausslegung der Ersten Acht Capitel*, cciiij^v. Cf. *Melanchthons Werke*, 180-82.
53. *Ausslegung der Ersten Acht Capitel*, cclxxvj^f-cclxxvij^f, and cclxxxix. Cf. *Melanchthons Werke*, 224-25.
54. *Ausslegung der Ersten Acht Capitel*, cccij^v-cccxviiij^v. Cf. *Melanchthons Werke*, 232-36.

55. Wengert briefly treats Melancthon's use of contrast in his own biblical comment, *Melancthon's Annotationes*, 201-203. See also Schnell, *Homiletische Theorie*, 138.

56. See Gerhard Ebeling's analysis of the dialectical nature of Luther's thought, *Luther, An introduction to his thought*, trans. R. A. Wilson (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1970), e.g. 23-26 and *passim*.

On Eternal Predestination and God's Election by Grace

The Exegetical Basis of the Lutheran Teaching in Cyriakus Spangenberg's Commentary on Romans 8 & 9

By: Dr. Robert Kolb

Martin Luther believed that his work *On the Bondage of the Will* represented the heart of his theology better than almost all his other writings.¹ Few of his followers agreed. This treatise was seldom republished in the decades following Luther's death in spite of the fact that his works were frequently reissued in the late sixteenth century. One of the few who were interested in this work, Nikolaus Gallus, had Justus Jonas's German translation of the *De servo arbitrio* reprinted in 1559, in the midst of the Synergistic controversy, in part because some of his fellow Lutherans were arguing that Luther himself had abandoned his understanding of the bondage of the will. Gallus countered those arguments with evidence from the reformer's later writings.² Nonetheless, Luther's followers for the most part ignored his dispute with Erasmus and downplayed the strong doctrine of election which Luther had placed at the foundation of his understanding of God's grace. By the end of the century the attempt to explain why some are saved and not others had led a stalwart defender of the Lutheran tradition, Aegidius Hunnius, to set the scene for Lutheran Orthodoxy's use of the concept of election "intuitu fidei," — in spite of the Formula of Concord's insistence on what the Swedish scholar Rune Söderlund has called a "broken doctrine of predestination."³ The "brokenness" of this Lutheran conceptualization of the doctrine of election lies in its setting the application of this teaching squarely and exclusively within the context of the proper

distinction of law and gospel. This means that the good news of election can be spoken only to repentant sinners who will find it a cause neither for despair nor for disobedience and contempt toward God. To the unrepentant the law of God must be applied, and the doctrine of election has nothing to do with the law's condemnation. For Luther, election could only be understood as an expression of God's good and gracious will for his children.

Among those who had most clearly understood Luther's concept of the bondage of the will and its corollary doctrine of election in the generation after his death was Cyriakus Spangenberg. He openly embraced Luther's *De servo arbitrio* and delighted in it.⁴ Spangenberg had occasioned a small flurry of protest when he published his *Seven Sermons on Predestination* in 1565⁵ and thus probably stands among those whom the Formula of Concord alluded to as the "our people" who had been involved in controversy over the doctrine of election.⁶ The exegetical basis for Spangenberg's position had been unfolded, at least in part, in his treatment of Romans 8 - 11, found in the homiletical commentary which he also prepared in the 1560s. Luther had used the closing verses of Romans 8 twice in the concluding paragraphs of his *De servo arbitrio*, and he had therein offered extensive treatment of much of Romans 9.⁷ Although Spangenberg's comment on these chapters reflects little specific influence from the text of the *De servo arbitrio*, it reflects Luther's understanding of the passages in general quite precisely. His treatment of these chapters invites investigation to ascertain how he understood Paul's words regarding God's choice of those whom he would save in Christ Jesus.

The Consolation of the Christian: Presupposition of the Doctrine of Election

Spangenberg's comment on the closing verses of Romans 8, which focus on God's election of his own, sets forth fourteen "magnificent,

beautiful, comforting reasons why Christians should be neither ashamed nor terrified by the cross and suffering in daily life." This treatment of this section of Paul's letter develops an approach which Philip Melanchthon had taught his students, Spangenberg among them.⁸ Although Melanchthon's list of reasons for comfort is shorter than Spangenberg's, the fundamental principle found expression in Melanchthon's commentaries on Romans and was repeated in the commentaries of Lutheran contemporaries of Spangenberg. The great Danish Philippist theologian Nikolaus Hemmingsen listed twelve sources of consolation on the basis of this section of Romans; the professor of theology at Frankfurt an der Oder Christoph Corner thirteen, and the Saxon exegete Nikolaus Selnecker listed fifteen "rationes" for Christian patience in every trial which Paul set forth here. In his lectures on Romans to his students at Jena, Tilemann Hesshus also followed this Melanchthonian model.⁹

Beginning in verse 17, Spangenberg rehearses these reasons for Christian consolation and comfort in the midst of the cross. Christ suffered, too (8:17). This suffering does not imply in any way that believers will not enjoy the future glory which Christ has prepared for them (8:18). All of creation suffers as it hopes for this future glory (8:19). If the rest of creation will be freed from suffering, certainly believers will be liberated from it as well (8:20-21). The saints and apostles, such as Saint Paul himself, were not free of suffering, but they did not turn away from their eternal hope because of it (8:23). It is the very nature of hope that we do not see that which gives us comfort, but nevertheless we await that for which we hope in patience (8:24-25). Hope will bring us an improvement in our lot, for hope will not let itself be shamed. The Holy Spirit provides us with his aid in the midst of suffering (8:26-27).

Toward a Definition of Predestination

The ninth reason for comfort in the midst of adversity begins Spangenberg's treatment of God's election of his own children. God has predestined and foreseen what will befall his chosen children, and so they can willingly experience whatever pleases him (8:28-30). God is mightier than everything which opposes his own, and he will help them (8:28). In any case, God is determined that we will not doubt his good pleasure toward us (8:31-37). He has chosen us with his firm and certain choice, and no cross or suffering can change this choice. We have a mediator, Jesus Christ, whose intercessions to God in behalf of his people will not fail (8:34). It is impossible for us to be separated or cut off from Christ (8:38-39).¹⁰

Spangenberg's discussion of Romans 8:28-30 begins with his reiteration of Paul's words that all things work together for the good of those who love God. Spangenberg recalled the promise of the psalmists that "in all that they do, they prosper" (Ps. 1:3b), and that God will act in behalf of those who trust in him (Ps. 37:5). Biblical examples of his promise abound, in the lives of Abraham, Jacob, Joseph, David, and Daniel, for instance. Spangenberg added his own experiences to theirs to demonstrate God's faithfulness in caring for his own. He also made certain that his readers understood that "those who love God" are those whom God loved first, those who keep God's Word (John 14:23a). His readers were also given to understand that God's love serves the needs of believers in the best possible fashion, even when they are in the midst of persecution, suffering, anxiety, peril, and death.¹¹

Believers have such assurance because they know that God has intentionally chosen them as his own. The doctrine of election serves to counter two mistaken opinions, Spangenberg observed. First, it rejects the error that God could love some who remain outside the remnant of his people whom he has called to be his children. There

are no heathen who will be saved; there is no salvation apart from the gospel. For no one comes to the Father except through Christ (John 14:6). Two fundamental components of Spangenberg's theology — God's mercy in Christ and his power which works through the word — are expressed here. Second, the doctrine of election renders any pretense to works-righteousness impossible. For Paul links God's love with the believer's trust which relies on him alone, and not on works.¹²

Both these points formed keystones for Spangenberg's understanding of God's unconditional election of those whom he would call to be his children. In both he was repeating fundamental principles which had guided Melancthon's interpretation of these passages in Romans 8-11.¹³ Also in his treatment of Paul's comments on election in Romans 11, Spangenberg made it clear that God chose his people in Christ, saved them through Christ, and justifies them through faith in Christ alone. "The teaching on God's predestination is certain and can never be altered. For God has predestined and chosen for himself, before the world began, in his Son Christ Jesus those who cannot be lost. What has not been chosen in Christ Jesus has no part in the Kingdom of God. Who is elect and who is not elect can be seen in faith or unfaith."¹⁴

What Christ accomplished for sinners according to God's eternal plan and purpose comes as pure gift to his people. Christoph Corner could equate election and God's gracious promise. In treating Romans 11:28, he wrote that here "election" simply means that God's promise to the forefathers is being repeated to those who remain his beloved people.¹⁵ That God chose his children before the creation of the world — and thus before they existed — affirms the fundamental Lutheran proclamation of salvation by grace alone. The comfort of the gospel rests upon its bestowal apart from any and every human merit for Luther and all his followers. Spangenberg reiterated this point time and time again in his exposition of this section of Romans. No other cause lies behind God's gracious choice of his elect children to be his own than his grace in Christ Jesus. Indeed, the elect do nothing, Spangenberg observed in his treatment of Romans 11:7-11.

Why do the elect obtain grace and salvation? Their salvation does not take place "on the basis of their desire, activity, worthiness or merit, but rather because God has chosen them to be saved, called them according to his plan and through faith to receive true righteousness. Because God resolved to do that, it must take place, on the basis of his pure divine grace and fatherly mercy."¹⁶

Spangenberg based his understanding of God's election of his own children upon Paul's word "purpose" in 8:28: "those who are called according to his purpose." He defined God's purpose as "his eternal plan, resolved according to his good pleasure, which no creature can frustrate or change." Peter had mentioned this "definite plan and foreknowledge of God" as the basis for the crucifixion of Christ in Acts 2:23; Paul had elaborated upon it in Ephesians 1 (especially verse 11). This was the purpose of God which has been revealed through Christ's appearance (1 Tim. 1:9-10). Spangenberg added a comment from Bernard of Clairvaux: this teaching does not terrify because it deals not with what believers have merited but with what God has put in place; not with the way believers feel but with God's intention to call them holy.¹⁷

For all the heirs of Luther, God's election of his own had to be understood through the means of grace. For them, the proclamation of the gospel, absolution, and the sacraments constituted God's predestining choice in action.¹⁸ In commenting on Paul's reassurance that "God has not rejected his people whom he foreknew" (Rom. 11:2), Spangenberg wrote that the elect dare never forget "the covenant God has made with us in baptism ... For his reliable promise and assurance in his word, in absolution, and in the sacraments (which cannot lie or deceive) give us comfort. We can boldly and firmly rely upon the means of grace as God's unchangeable word. Even when we think that our faith is not so strong, we can hold to this word." For — Spangenberg cited 2 Timothy 2:13 — even if we are faithless, he remains faithful.¹⁹ Indeed, God had ordained the proclamation of the gospel for the benefit and for the salvation of his elect, and he guided the elect among the Jewish people to faith through that word.²⁰

Spangenberg distinguished the inward call from the outward call, which God effects through the means of grace.

That inward sense of being called as God's child is completely dependent upon the outer call through the word. How can I be sure that I am a called child of God? he posed the question. Through God's word alone was his only answer. There is no other way to know what God's purpose for us is; there is no access to any secret counsel of God. Those who are troubled should know that God has called them through his gracious purpose; they could not have come to Christ on their own.²¹ Hesshus also distinguished between the outward call which comes from the public proclamation of God's word, and the internal call, which this external proclamation produces as the Father draws his people to faith in Christ and the Holy Spirit effects that faith in them.²²

God's Ordering of the Plan of Salvation

Spangenberg used Romans 8:29 and 30 to sketch a description of God's saving work in behalf of sinners. Even in the midst of the Synergistic controversy, Lutherans did not attempt to define an "ordo salutis," as did the Calvinist defenders of predestination, when they battled the Arminians in their midst a generation later. Nonetheless, Spangenberg did follow the text of Romans 8:29-30 in setting forth a description of God's plan as he understood it. Other contemporary Lutheran exegetes did the same.

Spangenberg presented his "order of salvation" three times in treating Romans 8 and 9, each time developing the steps in God's plan in a slightly different fashion. This suggests that he was not creating a dogmatic locus in his mind but rather responding to the text itself.

In the first instance, his comment on Romans 8: 29 and 30, the text began to lay out God's purpose with God's foreseeing his own as his children. Before we were born, before the foundations of the

world were laid, Spangenberg reminded his readers, God knew and determined that we would be his elect children. Adam's fall could not destroy his purpose for his elect. This foreknowing wrote the names of the elect in the Book of Life apart from any human merit; it simply pleased God to cast his favor and grace upon them and grasp them in his love.

Secondly, God predestined them to be his own. That meant that God insured them the glory of eternal life with him, but it also meant that he would submit them to the cross and suffering. It furthermore assures believers that all things will work together for their good and that they will be conformed to the image of his Son in their good works. They will not reflect the image of Satan (a statement which reflects Spangenberg's commitment to the doctrine of original sin of Matthias Flacius Illyricus).

Thirdly, God has called his own through the means of grace. Spangenberg used Paul's concept of calling to reject the inner spiritualism of the "Ravers" of his day who refused to recognize how God works through the various forms of his word (2 Thes. 2:13b-14).

Fourthly, God justifies his own through the imputation of the forgiveness of sins and the righteousness of Christ. This justification, Spangenberg insisted, is solely God's work.

Finally, God will glorify his own. To explain this Pauline phrase Spangenberg cited Bernhard of Clairvaux once again. In his sermons on the Book of Wisdom Bernhard had written that the Kingdom of God is planned, promised, presented, and perceived. It is planned in predestination, promised in the call of the means of grace; presented in justification, and perceived in glorification. In predestination is God's grace, Bernhard taught; in the call of the means of grace, his power; in justification, his joy; in glorification, his glory.²³

Spangenberg had not used Paul's text in Romans 8 as the basis of an extensive treatment of predestination. Instead, he had incorporated the concept of election somewhat directly but simply into his presentation of the comfort which God bestows upon his chosen children in the midst of suffering and the cross of daily life.

In his commentary he was pursuing an argument or explanation of Paul's message for his readers, not a doctrinal essay. He offered the pastors who would read his sermons suggestions for their own proclamation of the comfort of the gospel of Jesus Christ to their people. Spangenberg's pastoral concern treated the doctrine of election as it stood in the text, and he did not make a special issue of it.

On the other hand, the comfort of God's eternal choice of his own continued to help Spangenberg explicate Paul's message of the gospel's comfort in the interpretation of the remaining closing verses of Romans 8. In a similar fashion, in his commentary on 2 Thessalonians, Spangenberg had earlier emphasized the comfort which the doctrine of election bestows (in a comment on 2 Tim. 2:13, "If we are faithless, he remains faithful, for he cannot deny himself"). There Spangenberg proclaimed, "For we have a certain comfort since we know with certainty that God loves us. We do not doubt it at all, for we know that he has chosen us for salvation, and it is undeniable that he daily calls us through the outward word, through the gospel, to life everlasting. Through this call we become certain of our election. What more could our faithful God do than that?"²⁴ Similarly, the emphasis in his sermon on Romans 8:31-34 fell upon God's power as it exhibits itself in the saving work of Jesus Christ and in the word of God that conveys the love which God bestows through Christ's death and resurrection.²⁵ But in his sermon on what he called the "rhetorical masterpiece" of Romans 8:35-37 he emphasized two reasons why nothing can separate believers from God. First, he loves them. Second, he has set their lives in order through his purpose and plan.²⁶ Nonetheless, it is striking how little Spangenberg did say about election here, given the rich material on election in Romans 8, and his special interest in this part of Luther's teaching.

However, in his comment on Romans 9 he twice returned to the material provided in Romans 8:29-30 to sketch from it an outline or order of salvation. In the first of these "orders of salvation"

Spangenberg did read into the text a good deal of speculation. Earlier, he had been content to discuss God's foreknowledge and predestination quite simply as the origin, the first two steps, of God's action in behalf of his people. In chapter 9 Spangenberg elaborated on God's foreknowledge in five specific steps. He presupposed the distinction between God's general provision for the world and his provision for the salvation of his saints. In his enumeration of the ten steps in God's execution of his plans for his creation, Spangenberg let his imagination run beyond the text with the first five. First, he made the plan. Second, he created angels and his human creatures. Then, before God put his unchangeable plan into effect, angels and humankind fell. The fourth step in the unfolding of God's plan was his decision to punish the fall with damnation. Fifth, in his almighty power he confirmed the angels as they were, some fallen, some still holy. The sixth step embraces predestination: God mercifully resolved to give eternal life in Christ to a certain number of human creatures. Spangenberg's seventh step paraphrased the justification of the sinner in terms of the work of Christ: in his righteousness, God sent his Son to bear the punishment for sin and pay its debt. Eighth, he called his elect through the work of the Holy Spirit in the means of grace, here following rather than preceding justification (although it should be noted that Paul's justification is the action of the means of grace in the call rather than the work of Christ in its historical setting). Ninth, he rules and guides his people on earth, yet another addition to the outline of the text in Romans 8, to which Spangenberg returned for the final point. God's plan concludes with the final rejection of those whom he has not chosen and with the glorification of his elect.²⁷

In the subsequent sermon Spangenberg elaborated once again upon his understanding of the ordering of God's work of salvation. This time Spangenberg set forth the unfolding of God's gracious will in nine steps. First, God knew and saw all things (*omniscientia*, he labeled this first step). Second, he planned how he would order each and every part of his creation and what he would permit to happen (*praescientia*). He knew what would happen in the lives of evil people

as well as the good, but he did not plan or cause the evil in their lives. Third, he chose those whom he wanted to select as his own people, solely on the basis of his desire to be merciful to them (*electio*). Fourth, he predestined them and concluded how and when he would let them be born and how their lives would take their course (*praedestinatio*). Fifth, he called them according to his own schedule and revealed to them the secret counsel which he had resolved (*vocatio*). He made them righteous, and he sanctified them, steps six and seven in his order (*justificatio and sanctificatio*). Eighth, he strengthens, preserves, rules, and guides them in a marvelous fashion (*gubernatio*). Finally, he takes them at the end into eternal joy and glory, thus completing his eternal counsel and plan (*glorificatio*).²⁸ This enumeration involves less speculation about the mind of God before biblical revelation begins the story of creation — and more addition of biblical concepts, such as sanctification and God's gracious governance or providence in daily life. Steps three and four, election and predestination, speculate on how Paul's concept of single predestination might have unfolded. Steps one and two repeat a distinction which a number of Spangenberg's contemporaries were making in order to clarify the distinctions involved in the omniscience, fore-knowledge, and fore-planning of God. Omniscience, according to Spangenberg, embraced God's total knowing of everything. Fore-knowledge is a special divine characteristic, different from human knowledge which is dependent on its future object, for God's fore-knowledge determined what he would cause to happen. Predestination then placed what he fore-knew into his special plan for his chosen people. Though they were struggling with the same problem as they treated this text, Spangenberg's contemporary Lutheran exegetes each formulated a slightly different solution. Christoph Corner seems to have worked with a similar concept of God's foreknowledge although he did not distinguish it from omniscience. His foreknowledge took place from eternity, and predestination planned the salvation of those whom he had chosen from eternity to be his saved people. Corner proceeded then with the

three subsequent Pauline points in his order of salvation: vocation, justification, and glorification.²⁹ Selnecker placed what Paul described in Romans 8:28-30 within the context of his general providence or universal government of his creation, as Spangenberg had. Within this providential care for his world God had formulated a certain and unchangeable plan which determined the salvation of his chosen people. On the basis of that plan, which Selnecker found anchored in the term "purpose" in Romans 8:28 (as did Spangenberg), God had foreknown them as his chosen people through his limitless wisdom, Selnecker commented, without making it clear whether this foreseeing established its object or was dependent on it. Then God predestined them — who they would be and how they would come to God and be saved in, through, and on account of Christ. Selnecker, too, followed the simple order of Romans 8:29-30, in filling out an "order of salvation" which embraced being called through the gospel and the sacraments, being justified through the imputation of Christ's obedience and thus reconciled with God, and finally being liberated from all evils and glorified in eternal life.³⁰ Hesshus avoided separating the terms which Paul used in treating God's plan for his people into distinct stages or steps. He treated the distinctions in the terms for election, predestination, and predetermination, without pressing his analysis into discretely divided categories. All of them referred to God's planning before the foundation of the world for the salvation of his people.³¹

Among the five Late Reformation exegetes under study, only Nikolaus Hemmingsen clearly diverged from Spangenberg's reiteration of Luther's fundamental teaching in the direction of the later Lutheran position that God predestined in view of the faith he knew would be found in the hearts of believers. Hemmingsen also repeated the five steps toward final salvation, which Paul had dictated to exegetes in the text. The first, foreknowledge, he defined as follows: "Through his foreknowledge God foreknew everything which would happen in the future from eternity. ... For God does not see things as though they were absent but he beheld them as though they were present in his

could do that — but only of temporal blessings, the greatest of which was to serve as ancestor of the Messiah. In addition, the text compelled Hemmingsen to find in it a type, which represented the contrast between the children of the flesh and the children of the promise. God had not condemned Esau simply because he used him for this typological purpose.³⁹ In his sermon on Romans 9:14-15 Spangenberg continued his attack on reason's invasion of God's realm. God may do what he wishes, how he wishes. Everything he does is right, holy, precious, and good.⁴⁰ Spangenberg here seems to echo the nominalist assertion, found throughout Luther's theology, that God determines what is right and good; he does not merely conform to an eternally existing law because he is God and thus must be good.

Spangenberg recognized that the doctrine of election may cause the weak to stumble, and so he consciously pursued questions which arise in connection with the treatment of God's choice of his own. Elsewhere in treating predestination Spangenberg reiterated the necessity of recognizing the superiority of God's way of acting over human reason and thus avoiding rational attempts to decipher how God works.⁴¹ Corner, for instance, agreed; in commenting on Romans 11:33, he focused the concept of the unsearchable riches of God's wisdom upon the subject of election. "The human mind does not know how God knows, foresees, governs and accomplishes all things. Some are reborn, others are not reborn. They know nothing of the secret will of God. They only know what he has revealed of his essence and his will in his Word."⁴² Nonetheless, some troubling questions arise naturally when reading Romans 9:17, Paul's paraphrase of God's word to Pharaoh in Exodus 9:16, "I have raised you up for the very purpose of showing my power in you, so that my name may be proclaimed in all the earth," and the apostolic commentary upon these words, "So then God has mercy upon whomever he wills, and he hardens the heart of whomever he wills." Following his preceptor, Melancthon, Spangenberg rejected any suggestion that God can be the creator of evil. Melancthon frequently expressed a horror of the "madness of the Stoics" which asserts a concept of necessity that

places upon God the blame for evil, and he reflected that horror in his comment on Romans 9.⁴³ In treating this passage Spangenberg placed the blame for Pharaoh's hardheartedness upon Pharaoh himself in an attempt to soften Paul's claim that God had raised up Pharaoh in order to show his power. Finally, Spangenberg insisted, God is merciful and just.⁴⁴

Corner and Hemmingsen dealt with the problem through extensive analyses of Hebrew grammar and the differences between Piel, Hiphil, and Kal forms of the Hebrew verb. Following the law of contradiction, Hemmingsen concluded that the several descriptions of what happened to Pharaoh's attitude toward God in Exodus 8 and 9 cannot all be true: Pharaoh hardened his own heart, Pharaoh's heart was hardened, God hardened Pharaoh's heart. He proceeded from the dogmatic presupposition that the meaning of this phrase must be in accord with God's showing mercy to those who believe and obey his voice, and his rejecting those who do not heed his many admonitions and persist in sin and rebellion. Therefore, he concluded that when Paul says, "God hardened Pharaoh's heart," he meant that God did not soften Pharaoh's heart. Pharaoh willingly let his heart remain hard. God "hardened" it by permitting Pharaoh to remain hard in his heart and by not preventing that hardening. "The effective cause of his hardening did not lie in God himself but in the man."⁴⁵ The human will had to play a critical role in the human creature's relationship with God in the theology of this disciple of Melancthon. Nikolaus Selnecker was no longer somewhat disposed to synergism when he lectured on Romans in the mid 1580s, but he also struggled to avoid a literal interpretation of Paul's words. He also employed arguments from Hebrew grammar, with an analysis quite similar to Hemmingsen's, and he concluded that God punishes unrighteousness but is never its cause. He may withdraw his fatherly hand from the impious, but he also admonishes them and calls them from their sin. When they remain obdurate and proud and secure in their sin, God justly punishes them. Selnecker knew that some would push the matter to its limit and ask why God has not saved all. That question

comes from the devil: it is the question of the knowledge of good and evil. It dare not be approached.⁴⁶ Christoph Corner, too, worked hard to excuse God. He insisted that the mysterious and secret plans of God stand behind Paul's statement, and God's righteousness must be defended, and no blame dare be placed upon him.⁴⁷ Hesshus agreed; it is God's will that even vessels of wrath be without sin. It is their fault that they are not.⁴⁸

The focus of the believer's attention should fall upon the promise offered in the doctrine of election, Spangenberg argued. As a conscientious pastor, this commentator wanted to aid his readers in dealing with the text in a pastorally sensitive way. Indeed, the law requires that God's power to harden hearts must be proclaimed, so that the wrath of God be clear to those who are secure in their sins. Only through this terrifying message will they be brought to repentance. Such hardening of the heart is only the well-deserved punishment for sin. Thus, God is acting in his mercy when he lays burdens of cross and illness upon the Old Adam; such a rein in the mouth prevents us from carrying out our sinful intentions. Therefore believers view God's hardening of the heart as a warning and even a comfort since it demonstrates God's concern for his people.⁴⁹

In Romans 9:19-21 Paul posed the question, "Why then does God still find fault? For who can resist his will?" His rejoinder echoed God's words to Job: Who indeed are you, a human creature, to argue with God? Has the potter no right over the clay to make out of the same lump one object for special use and another for ordinary use? Luther himself had rather forthrightly confessed the sovereignty of God in treating this passage. He himself adapted his views pastorally as he later treated God's predestining love of his elect.⁵⁰ So did his followers. For example, Nikolaus Selnecker distinguished the concepts of vessel of wrath and vessel of mercy neatly, and in typical Lutheran fashion. Vessels of wrath have been subjected to God's wrath and condemnation by his decree, but not because of any absolute necessity or an absolute will of God. They have provoked God's wrath instead, and they have earned his condemnation through

their works. He has not been angry with them from eternity; he did not foresee them into damnation. His anger is his *opus alienum*. On the other hand, God prepared vessels of mercy — those who trust in his Son — simply according to his good pleasure, through and on account of his Son.⁵⁰

Spangenberg began his discussion of predestination and election in connection with Paul's use of the potter analogy by describing this doctrine as a two-edged sword. The goal of all Christian teaching is to demonstrate that God is our dear Father, who has chosen us in Christ Jesus and preserves us for salvation. Paul's intention in this passage is only to offer troubled consciences the comfort of this gospel. Human reason will argue against the comfort of the gospel from a number of angles, but faith returns always to the conviction that God chose without reason, simply because he wanted to have us as his children. He gives faith to those to whom it pleases him to give the gift of faith.⁵²

Paul continued, "What if God, desiring to show his wrath and to make known his power, has endured with much patience the objects of wrath that are made for destruction, and what if he has done so in order to make known the riches of his glory for the objects of mercy, which he has prepared beforehand for glory ... ?" (Rom. 9:22, 23). Spangenberg reveled in God's great patience, which comforts the faithful and takes all excuse away from those who are godless, for, as at the time of Noah, God always displays patience toward them. Spangenberg continued: All people are vessels or instruments of God. They reveal either his grace or his wrath, his mercy or his justice. Those people who are vessels of God's wrath are prepared for condemnation and sent to damnation through their own evil deeds and wickedness. God pronounces upon them his just condemnation because of their sins, and this judgment destines them for hell. But, Spangenberg wanted to make clear, God has created no one to be a vessel of wrath. Because all have fallen under God's wrath through sin, God has prepared some to be vessels of mercy in Christ through his marvelous grace, and indeed this has left those who remain vessels

of wrath bound for condemnation, even though God has given them life and bears them with great patience.⁵³ A generation earlier Luther's close friend, Nikolaus von Amsdorf, had followed the implications of the *De servo arbitrio* into a doctrine of double predestination. He expressed it only privately, in a critique of Melanchthon's views on the freedom of the will and his condemnation of a doctrine of absolute necessity, as they appeared in the second edition of Melanchthon's *Loci communes theologici*.⁵⁴ Spangenberg rejected this solution, and remained instead within the pastoral tension of Luther's "broken" doctrine of election, within the dialectic imposed by the proper distinction of law and gospel. This same position is found in others of Spangenberg's commentaries. In commenting on 2 Thessalonians 2:5-12 Spangenberg charged the condemnation of unbelievers unambiguously to their own account. Satan's lies created the framework for sin, but the godless are lost because they have not loved the truth. They dare not complain that they were not dealt with justly, that they were condemned without just cause. They have refused to accept God's word, and God rightly punishes them.⁵⁵ Spangenberg made the same point in his treatment of 1 Timothy 2:3-7, where — interestingly — he failed to react to the statement that God wants all to be saved and come to a knowledge of the truth, an important passage for the Lutheran understanding of atonement and election. Here he did affirm that Christ gave himself for the faithful and the evil, but the evil, stubborn unbelievers have not received the gift to their benefit. They bear the blame for that; God does not.⁵⁶ Spangenberg summarized his understanding of election in a pair of sermons which conclude his exegesis of Romans 9. He began with the presupposition that the preacher must proclaim what is in God's word. God has commanded that the doctrine of election be proclaimed to his people. Paul's example confirms this command of God. The proper understanding of the gospel requires it. Furthermore, it has a number of benefits. This proclamation shames reason, strengthens faith, makes believers certain of their salvation, and builds true humility. It offers comfort in every tribulation.⁵⁷ The doctrine of election meant

nothing else to Spangenberg. Its exaltation of God's power served only to comfort those whom God had called through the means of grace to be his children. For his choice of them to be his own lifted their assurance of his love above every human factor, above all earthly merit and effort. Salvation lies secure in God's loving choice of his people as his own.

Specific Questions Regarding Election

In eternity God undertook to create humankind and to choose a church for himself in Christ. He resolved to bless it with grace, wisdom, joy, and salvation. Later in life Melancthon seems to have felt most comfortable referring predestination to the church in general and not committing himself on the election of a specific number of believers.⁵⁸ Spangenberg could not find comfort apart from the specificity of God's choice of individuals, and for him that specific choice dictated that the number of elect is fixed from eternity. God had predestined a specific number of people for this assembly of his own. Spangenberg rejected those fellow Lutherans — "synergists" he called them — who taught a more general sense of election. God, who numbers hairs on human heads (Matt. 10:30), our tears and tossings (Ps. 56:6), and the days of our lives (Ps 139:16), has also numbered those whom he has chosen for his church. As many as are destined for eternal life do become believers (Acts 13:48). The elect will obtain the salvation that is theirs in Christ Jesus (2 Tim. 2:10). God's choice is his "eternal, certain, unchangeable, powerful counsel and decision to justify, save, and glorify a magnificent remnant according to his good pleasure."⁵⁹ Selnecker agreed. He posed the question: Did God determine that a certain number of chosen individuals would be predestined to eternal life. God knows his own (2 Tim. 2:10-13), and therefore he knows the number of those who are to be saved and who those persons are. "This is a great

consolation," he had to conclude.⁶⁰ He shared Spangenberg's point of view precisely.

Nonetheless, Spangenberg did not suggest that believers should wonder whether they are among that fixed number. That they can know on the basis of God's promise to them in the means of grace and in the faith which the Holy Spirit has produced through word and sacrament. They can be certain that God wants all to come to a knowledge of the truth (1 Tim. 2:4), he observed in a Christmas sermon in 1559. Those who do not believe bring God's judgment upon themselves; God's wanting them to be saved is a given.⁶¹ Also in his treatment of Romans 3:23 — "the righteousness of God through faith in Jesus Christ for all who believe" — Spangenberg recognized the doubt which the doctrine of election could arouse. Paul added the word "all" in that passage precisely to combat the believer's wondering whether he, too, could be among the elect. Christ's merit and obedience bring comfort in the midst of such doubt.⁶² The means of grace connect the believer with that merit and obedience.

One of the critical questions in the doctrine of election concerns the possibility that believers may fall from grace. In the controversy between Johann Marbach and Jerome Zanchi in Strassburg at about the time Spangenberg was writing his commentary on Romans, the question of the perseverance of the saints divided the two and became a critical marker for the border between Calvinist and Lutheran understandings of election.⁶³ Marbach was driven by his concern to preserve the proper distinction of law and gospel in public preaching, and he therefore opposed Zanchi's logical insistence upon "the perseverance of the saints." This term therefore became the butt of a standard Lutheran criticism, particularly as the synergistically inclined doctrine of Lutheran Orthodoxy hardened its lines of defense against Calvinism. Spangenberg more correctly understood Luther's use of the doctrine of election within the framework of the gospel. While Luther could insist that it is possible to fall from grace,⁶⁴ he also knew that the comfort of the gospel depends upon the assurance which believers have in God's unconditional choice of them as his own and in it the

promise that they are elect, delivered to them through the means of grace. Spangenberg admitted that the elect may fall into sin, but he assured his readers that they would not be lost eternally since God had chosen them. Citations from the Venerable Bede and Augustine reinforced this point.⁶⁵ In his earlier treatment of 2 Thessalonians 2:13 Spangenberg had expressed the same understanding of election. "The faithful lambs of Christ can indeed lose their way and stumble, but they will not be lost; they cannot be totally corrupted. For their faithful shepherd Jesus Christ will never forsake them completely. They should take comfort and learn to recognize from their weakness how extremely necessary God's help, blessing, and support is for them, how they can do nothing in and of themselves, how faithful, good, and loving God is in his regard for them, how wonderfully the Lord deals with his saints, how we always have more than enough reasons which move us to give God thanks and praise."⁶⁶ In the sermons on Romans 9 Spangenberg counseled against asking the inevitable question: Why does God permit his saints to fall into sin again? Believers should simply be thankful that he accepts sinners and not despair. On the other hand, Spangenberg warned, they should also avoid a false security and presumption over against their Lord. For any delving into God's hidden will, beyond what Scripture says, will lead to either presumption or despair.⁶⁷

Spangenberg went on to analyze God's revealed provision for his people in the midst of the struggles of daily life. For the aim of his preaching centered on the edification of his hearers. They could take comfort in God's providing for their salvation. It is based upon Christ's redemption of his people through his own merit, obedience, suffering, death, and resurrection. Upon this basis God calls both Jews and heathen alike. He converts sinners through the preaching of the gospel. He sanctifies believers through the Holy Spirit's indwelling in their hearts. He supports them through persecution, cross, warfare, and struggle. He completes his care for the saints at the Day of Judgment.⁶⁸

For Spangenberg election was no secret operation, conducted apart from public view. Election exhibits itself through the word in the faith of those whom God converts. Therefore, the faithful can always take comfort in God's promise which they have received through the means of grace. For God did not elect on the basis of works or faith which he foresaw in his chosen people. He chose them simply because of his grace.⁶⁹

Nonetheless, the fruits of God's choosing appear in the believer's life. The new heart which God gives exhibits itself on the basis of the true righteousness which believers possess through the forgiveness of their sins. This righteousness is displayed in the life of new obedience, a life which avoids evil deeds, embraces the good, confesses the faith before others, and is patient in suffering. The final result of God's election is the eternal glory of his saints.

The primer on election which Spangenberg developed in his comment on 2 Thessalonians 2:13-17 emphasized the role of the means of grace in the practical use of a Lutheran understanding of election. Spangenberg outlined how God shows his mercy to his people. He began with baptism, but the ultimate roots of God's baptismal promise lay, for Spangenberg, in election. He defined God's election as "nothing other than his choice of a special people, many individuals, for himself. Out of his own free will and its good inclination he chose them to be his church and his congregation, that they might recognize and praise him. He graciously gave them righteousness, forgiveness of sins, and eternal life, and he wants to share his eternal glory with them after this life. The text of Romans 8 looms behind this description of God's election. The elect include all those who have received comfort through faith in the Lord and have not fallen from the faith. Sin causes people to be rejected; Christ is the only cause for their election. In addition to Romans 8, Spangenberg cited John 6:44-46, "No one comes to me unless the Father calls him." Those who hear and learn the gospel and do not arrogantly discard it but find comfort in it and remain in it, even if they experience weakness, are the elect. Spangenberg consistently put the

emphasis on God's love and mercy and on the power of the gospel, all the while acknowledging that believers will often experience weakness of faith.

Spangenberg's primer continued by answering the fundamental questions:

Who elects? — God. When did he make the choice? — Before the creation of the world (Eph. 1). Why did he elect? — So that believers would not have to worry about God's providential care which he concluded in his divine counsel from the very beginning.

Believers are freed from the concern over whether God has intended them to be saved. For in 2 Thessalonians 2 Paul had assured his readers that they have three guarantees of their status as the elect children of God. First, the sanctifying power of the Holy Spirit assures them of salvation. Second, their faith in the truth, in Christ himself, provides such a guarantee. For Christ is the holiness of his own elect people. Third, the call through which God has called us in the preaching of the gospel gives certain assurance to believers. Again, Spangenberg felt compelled to note that there is great comfort in weakness itself, for our election assures us of salvation and our election is confirmed in the call of the gospel.⁷⁰

Spangenberg's conclusion that the doctrine of election can serve only the gospel had governed his entire presentation and analysis of Paul's comments in Romans 8 and 9. He intended to represent and apply Luther's understanding of the bondage of the will and God's unconditional election of his people as he believed Luther had presented it, as a part of the comfort of the gospel. The assertion of this understanding of Luther and of the biblical message had earned Spangenberg some criticism from fellow Lutherans about the time he commented on texts in Paul's letter to the Romans which formed the basis for his view. His commentaries help illuminate his position and its fundamental concern. Spangenberg sought no neat dogmatic definition of election but wanted to use it only as a convincing comfort for repentant sinners. That meant that he anchored its use in the means of grace, and he did not believe the doctrine of election

could be treated apart from the assurance which God's chosen and baptized children have in word and sacrament. Although at points he let speculation lure him beyond the text of the epistle, this concern for comfort and for anchoring the believer's life in the means of grace informed and directed his exposition of the text. He sought to teach a doctrine of predestination which could be preached for the comfort God's elect children.

Notes

1. He stated this in a letter to Wolfgang Capito, July 9, 1537, *WA Br* 8:99.

2. *Das der freye Wille nichts sey. Antwort/D. Martini Lutheri/an Erasmus Roterodamum/ Verdeuscht durch D. Justum Jonam/ Zuuor niemals allein in Druck ausgangen. Mit einer nutzlichen notwendiger Vorrede*, ed. Nikolaus Gallus (Regensburg: Heinrich Geissler, 1559). After at least thirteen editions of the Latin original were published in 1525 and 1526, the work appeared thereafter during the sixteenth century from Lutheran sources only in the collected works published in Wittenberg and Jena in the 1550s. The Gallus edition was the third of the German translation, the first two appearing in 1526. The Calvinist press of Matthaeus Harnisch at Neustadt an der Haardt reissued the Latin in 1591.

3. Rune Söderlund, *Ex praevisa fide, Zum Verständnis der Prädestinationslehre in der lutherischen Orthodoxie* (Hannover: Lutherisches Verlagshaus, 1983), esp. 13-28.

4. *Ausslegung der Letsten Acht Capitel der Episteln S. PAVLI an der Roemer* (Strassburg: Samuel Emmel, 1569), xxiii^r.

5. Spangenberg, *DE PRAEDESTINATIONE. Von der Ewigen Vorsehung/ vnd Goettlichen Gnadenwahl. Sieben Predigten*. (Erfurt: Georg Bawman, 1567; reissued, Eisleben: Andreas Petri, 1568). Spangenberg defended his work in *APOLOGIA Bericht vnd Erklerung M. Cyria. Spangenberg: Der Sieben Predigten halber/*

von der PRAEDESTINATION: Goettlichen Versehung/ vnd Ewigen Gnadenwahl in Druck geben (Eisleben: Andreas Petri, 1568) (two printings).

6. *Die Bekenntnisschriften der evangelisch-lutherischen Kirche* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1982), 1063,26 - 1064,13, SD XI,1.

7. *WA* 18, 786,3-7, 787,14; *LW* 33: 293, 295.

8. *CR* XV: 668-674 (1532 edition).

9.. Hemmingsen, *Commentaria in omnes epistolas apostolorum, Pavli, Petri, Ivdae, Iohannis, Iacobi, et in eam quae ad Hebraeos inscribitur ...* (Leipzig: Voegel, 1571), 90; Corner, *In epistolam D. Pavli ad Romanos scriptam Commentarius* (Heidelberg: Johann Spies, 1583), 106^r-110^v; Selnecker, *In omnes epistolas D. Pauli apostoli Commentarius plenissimus ...*, ed. Georg Selnecker (Leipzig: Jacob Apel, 1595), 173-174, 181; Hesshus, *Explicatio epistolae Pavli ad Romanos* (Jena: Günther Hüttich, 1571), 253-271.

10. *Ausslegung der Ersten Acht Capitel der Episteln S. Pavli an der Roemer* (Strassburg: Samuel Emmel, 1566), cccxxv^r-ccclxviii^r.

11. *Ibid.*, cccxlviij^v-cccclix^v.

12. *Ibid.*, cccl^v.

13. e.g. in his Romans commentary of 1556, *CR* XV, 977.

14. *Ausslegung der Letsten Acht Capitel der Episteln S. PAVLI an die Roemer* (Strassburg, 1569), clx^v, cf. cxxxj^r.

15. Corner, 147^v.

16. *Ibid.*, cxxx^v; cf. cxxij^r, cxxv^v.

17. Spangenberg, *Ersten Capitel*, cclj^r.

18. Cf. the similar description of Gerhard O. Forde, *Theology Is for Proclamation* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1990).

19. Spangenberg, *Letsten Capitel*, ccxj^v.

20. *Ibid.*, cxxx^v-cxxxj^r.

21. Spangenberg, *Ersten Capitel*, ccclj^r.

22. Hesshus, *Explicatio epistolae Pavli ad Romanos* (Jena: Günther Hüttich, 1571), 262^v.
23. Spangenberg, *Ersten Capitel*, cccxlviii^v-ccclxiii^r.
24. Spangenberg, *Die erste vnd andere Episteln des heyligen Apostels S. Pauli an die Thessalonicher ...* (1557; Strassburg: Samuel Emmel, 1564), xxv^{r-v}, xxvij^v.
25. Spangenberg, *Ersten Capitel*, cccliiij^v-ccclvij^r.
26. *Ibid.*, cccliiij^v-ccclxiii^r.
27. Spangenberg, *Letsten Capitel*, lxxv^v-lxxvj^r.
28. *Ibid.*, lxxiiij^r-lxxviii^r.
29. Corner, 111^r.
30. Selnecker, 178; *cf.* 207-208.
31. Hesshus, 261^v.
32. Hemmingsen, 90.
33. Söderlund, 65-72.
34. Selnecker, 213-214.
35. Spangenberg, *Letsten Capitel*, xvj^v.
36. *Ibid.*, x^r-xviii^r. *Cf.* Luther, *De servo arbitrio*, WA 18, 722,30 - 727,24; LW 33: 195-202.
37. Selnecker, 188.
38. Corner, 120^v.
39. Hemmingsen, 98.
40. Spangenberg, *Letsten Capitel*, xix^r-xx^v.
41. Spangenberg, *Letsten Capitel*, clxxj^r, cxxxvj^r.
42. Corner, 149^v.
43. CR XV: 981-982.
44. Spangenberg, *Letsten Capitel*, xxviii^r-xxx^r. *Cf.* Luther's assertions concerning God's free choice in treating this passage in the *De servo arbitrio*, WA 18:702,1 - 720,27.
45. Hemmingsen, 100-102.
46. Selnecker, 190-197.
47. Corner, 124^{r-v}.
48. Hesshus, 321^r-324^v.
49. Spangenberg, *Letsten Capitel*, xxxij^v-xxxvj^r.

50. In his commentary on Genesis 26, *WA* 43, 457-463; *LW* 5: 42-50; cf. in *De servo arbitrio*, *WA* 18: 727,25 - 730,15; *LW* 33: 203-206.

51. Selnecker, 198-200.

52. Spangenberg, *Letsten Capitel*, xxxvij^f-xlj^f.

53. *Ibid.*, xlij^v-xlvj^r; cf. his treatment of Romans 9:30-33, lijr-lix^v.

54. Robert Kolb, "Nikolaus von Amsdorf on Vessels of Wrath and Vessels of Mercy: A Lutheran's Doctrine of Double Predestination," *Harvard Theological Review* 69 (1969): 325-341.

55. Spangenberg, *Thessalonicher*, xxj^v-xxij^v.

56. Spangenberg, *Die erste Epistel S. Pauli an Timotheum. Ausgelegt vnd gepredigt ...* (Strassburg: Samuel Emmel, 1564), xl^f.

57. Spangenberg, *Letsten Capitel*, lx^v-lxj^f.

58. *CR* XV: 675 (1532 edition), 968, 947-981 (1556 edition).

59. Spangenberg, *Letsten Capitel*, lxv^f-lxix^v.

60. Selnecker, 214.

61. Spangenberg, *Fuenff Predigten vber den anfang des Euangelij S. Johannis Im Anfang war das Wort etc.* (Eisleben: Urban Gaubisch, 1559), G^v.

62. Spangenberg, *Ersten Capitel*, xcix^f.

63. James M. Kittelson, "Marbach vs. Zanchi, The Resolution of Controversy in Late Reformation Strasbourg," *The Sixteenth Century Journal* VIII,3 (1977): 31-44; Jürgen Moltmann, *Prädestination und Perseveranz. Geschichte und Bedeutung der reformierten Lehre "de perseverantia sanctorum"* (Neukirchen: Neukirchner Verlag, 1961).

64. *Bekennnisschriften*, 448,19 - 449,4, Smalcald Articles, III.

65. Spangenberg, *Letsten Capitel*, lxxxj^f-lxxxij^f.

66. Spangenberg, *Thessalonicher*, xxv^f.

67. Spangenberg, *Letsten Capitel*, lxxxvij^f-xcij^v.

68. *Ibid.*, *Letsten Capitel*, lxvj^v.

69. *Ibid.*, lxx^v-lxxij^f.

70. Spangenberg, *Thessalonicher*, xxv^v-xxvij^v.

Preaching and Hearing in Luther's Congregations Village Pastors and Peasant Congregations

By: Dr. Robert Kolb

"Through their proclamation preachers become fathers of their hearers, for when the seed of the divine word falls into the hearts of the hearers, and they receive it in faith, they are as if born anew... . Because of this preachers must take care that their hearers are not led astray. For that reason they are called caretakers of souls."¹ In this brief comment in his introduction to his commentary of Paul's letter to Titus, Cyriacus Spangenberg revealed much about his view of the situation into which he had been called to serve, the parish ministry in the small town of Mansfeld.

Spangenberg disclosed his views of his own calling and of the activities of both pastors and people in his homiletical commentaries on seven of Paul's epistles which he first preached and then published during the 1560s. His comments offer glimpses of parish life in his day.

Preachers and Hearers: The Pastor and His Congregation

He followed common Lutheran usage of the time in describing himself and his colleagues as "preachers" and the members of their congregations as "hearers." This common usage reflects the view of the reformers of Luther's movement in defining the office of pastor above all as an office of proclaiming God's word. Parishioners, in this

view, were, above all, hearers of that word. Everything in their lives was to flow from their listening to it. Pastors preached the Word as those whom God had called to be caretakers of the spiritual lives of their people. Because the structure of Spangenberg's world arose from the family, that structure followed the model of the family. Pastors were to function as the fathers of their parishioners, just as contemporary rulers liked to project themselves as fathers of their subjects.

Spangenberg regarded the letter to Titus as an exposition of the shape of human life as God had designed it. He viewed that form of life through the lens of the medieval division of human activity into three estates, those of domestic life, political life, and ecclesiastical life. Chapter one treats the calling of preacher, chapter two the calling of the common people in their families (which included economic activity, conducted as it was within family units for the most part in medieval society), and chapter three the temporal government.² (Such a division oversimplified the structure of this epistle, but it provided the occasion for setting forth his social analysis.) Luther had taken this three-fold division of society with which he had grown up for granted. However, he profoundly altered the theological framework in which it operated. He taught Spangenberg and his other students that callings in all three estates were equally godly, that the offices of priest, monk, and nun did not provide a closer walk with God. He also had transformed the understanding of this divine plan, *e.g.*, in that he believed that every individual is called by God to specific tasks in all three estates. Spangenberg was following this break with medieval theory when he defined for the laity its own office, as hearer, within the ecclesiastical estate.³ Spangenberg had learned from Luther that believers could serve God in all areas of life since earthly service in any calling contributed nothing to their standing before God. There the gift of the righteousness of Christ alone made believers his children.

Because he began his program of writing his homiletical commentary on Paul's epistles in what he believed was the

chronological order of their original composition, Spangenberg treated both Titus and 1 Timothy among the first seven books of the Pauline corpus on which he actually completed work. Therefore, he left extensive comments on his own model for pastoral ministry, since particularly in those two epistles, and also in 2 Corinthians, he had opportunity to make extensive comments on the calling of the pastor. Within his late medieval context Spangenberg preserved the pivotal and unique place of the pastoral office in God's plan for the church. Nonetheless, he did not regard the pastorate as the only office of leadership in the church. In addition to the parish pastor he could list the superintendents or bishops to whom they were subject, as well as an array of lesser callings to special offices of leadership within the church: chaplains, "fathers of the church" (elders), "altar people," "hospital" masters, deacons, giftmasters, schoolmasters, sextons, organists, distributors of alms, hospital wardens, gravediggers, etc.⁴ The church in Mansfeld had a wide variety of tasks for which its official servants held responsibility. Spangenberg traced the origin of all of these offices to the institution of deacons in Acts 6:1-6, and he placed the responsibility for appointing them with either the elders of the congregation or the congregation itself.

The Pastoral Office

Paul's comments on his own office as apostle gave Spangenberg many opportunities to define various aspects of the pastoral office. In commenting on 1 Corinthians 3:9, he described the "honor of the preacher." It consists in being called God's servant, in being chosen by God in his grace to preach the gospel, and in being named the instrument through which God brings people to trust in him. To the honor of being called "servant of God" Paul added the title "head of God's household," in 1 Corinthians 4:1, and Spangenberg rejoiced in being able to serve up God's spiritual food for those whom God has gathered into his household.⁵

Spangenberg found in Titus 2:15 a basis for developing his understanding of the activities which God calls the local pastor to perform. "These, then, are the things you should teach. Encourage and

rebuke with all authority. Do not let anyone despise you," the passage reads. The pastor's duties include "speaking" or preaching, encouraging, and rebuking. The pastor's message consists in the proclamation of how human creatures become holy, righteous, and at peace before God and how they live in a Christian and blessed way on earth. The whole Christian life can be defined in terms of faith and love.

The preacher begins by showing his people that they are sinners. All human creatures are by nature children of wrath, without any understanding of God's ways and word. They are foolish, erring, ungodly, and full of worldly lusts, wickedness, envy, and hate. They have earned eternal death, hell, and damnation. The marginal note labels this paragraph "law."

Joined to this proclamation is that which is labeled "gospel" in the margin. It is a proclamation of God's special love and mercy for the whole human race. His love took form in the sending of his Son Jesus Christ into the world to redeem and reconcile us to God. His love also takes form as he cleanses his people from all impurity through his Holy Spirit, who comes in word and sacrament.

The third element in the pastor's preaching should show that Christ did not redeem his people so that they might live according to their own will and pleasure. He redeemed them to be his, to serve him and keep his commands as they deny their ungodly essence and worldly lusts. For God disciplines his people to care for the neighbor and live a godly life in the world. This element of the preacher's proclamation is labeled "new obedience" in the marginal note.

The final part of this proclamation points to hope under the sufferings of spiritual trials and the cross of daily living. Spangenberg's instructors in Wittenberg had taught him to analyze the biblical text according to a topical outline, and so he reviewed for his people and the preachers who might read his printed sermons what topics each of these four elements should bring to mind. As they show their people how to recognize that they are sinful, preachers treat several articles of faith, or topics of teaching: creation, the fall

of Adam, original sin and other sins, the law, the wrath of God, death, hell, and regret and sorrow over sin. In teaching his people about faith, the preacher recalls the topics of the goodness and grace of God, his promises, the gospel, the incarnation, suffering, death, resurrection, and ascension of Christ, the forgiveness of sins, the Holy Spirit, baptism, absolution, and the Lord's Supper. Justification and the means of grace together constituted the gospel for Spangenberg.

He captured the principles for Christian living in two categories which followed from law and gospel. In treating love, the pastor speaks of the topics of new obedience, the transformation of the human creature, good works, prayer, fasting, almsgiving, and everything else which relates to the mortification of the old Adam and the demonstration of mercy to others, according to their callings. The final element in his preaching, hope, leads the preacher to speak of the cross in daily living, prayer, patience, fear of God, the final coming of Christ, the Last Day, the resurrection of the dead, and eternal life.⁶ Above all else, Spangenberg believed that pastors must convey the word of God correctly to their people. All else depended on not mixing false teaching with God's word.⁷

Spangenberg used the three verbs of Titus 2:15 to divide the preacher's proclamation into three kinds. "To speak" refers to instruction in what the hearers have not yet heard and do not know. "To encourage" refers to the repetition of what they have heard. Year after year the pericopes of the church help the pastor drive home the simple teachings of the catechism, the basis of what Christians are to believe. It is also necessary "to rebuke," Spangenberg insisted, although pastors should not take pleasure in rebuking. Instead, they should call their people to repentance with sharp but sober words. Finally, Spangenberg admonished the clergy among his readers, preachers should act in such a way that their lives teach their hearers and do not bring contempt upon themselves. They will receive a good deal of contempt without earning it in their office, he warned.⁸

In preaching on 1 Thessalonians 2:1-16 Spangenberg offered his hearers and readers a list of characteristics of the good preacher, based upon both Paul's example and his words in this pericope. Good pastors do not shy away from the cross; they are ready to suffer. They are not bothered or distracted by the slander of their opponents (*cf.* Acts 16:16-40). God gives them joy. They preach and teach the gospel, and they experience many struggles and cares in doing so. They admonish hypocrites against error and immorality. God confirms and sustains them. They trust the gospel. They do not bend their message to the desires of their hearers but proclaim and praise the gospel. They defend it against its adversaries. They strive to please God and not other human creatures. They do not flatter and pander to the itching ears of sinners but rather speak the truth bluntly. They are not greedy or ambitious; they do not seek the honor they deserve. They do not burden their congregations, and they treat their hearers as a mother would. They have a heartfelt desire for their people to repent, and they rejoice when that repentance takes place. They are eager and prepared to share the teaching of the gospel and its comfort with their hearers. They are ready to lay down their lives for the congregation. They are not lazy, but they conduct their responsibilities with energy and zeal as they absolve, comfort, and carry out other aspects of their calling, including disciplining sinners and calling them to repentance. For God has called preachers to do that just as he has called fathers to discipline their children.⁹

In a somewhat briefer overview of the pastoral office, based upon 2 Corinthians 4:1-2, Spangenberg's picture of the ministry was shaped by Paul's admonition against secret, shameful ways and against deceit. The pastor should be zealous in his responsibilities and not scared off by dangers in the exercise of the pastoral calling. Pastors should avoid secret sins and shame and every kind of deceitful cunning and craftiness. No pastor dare falsify God's word; all preachers must reveal it in its full truth to their hearers.¹⁰ Spangenberg did not hesitate to criticize pastors who neglected their duties and did not take responsibilities seriously. He condemned self-seeking pastors who

sought the favor of other people rather than God's honor, who tolerated godless living in their congregations to curry favor.¹¹

Spangenberg wanted the clergy who read his commentary to have confidence in their own calling as God's messengers. Paul's assurance to the Corinthians that they could be certain of his message (2 Corinthians 1:7-22) gave Spangenberg occasion to offer that kind of assurance to the preachers of the word. Paul's basis for his own assurance, as Spangenberg paraphrased it, was that he had "preached Christ; not that I have confessed one article of faith now and denied it at another time, but that I have at all times continuously proclaimed Christ purely and simply." Spangenberg continued,

Thus, every preacher may be certain of what he teaches when he mounts the pulpit to proclaim God's word when he knows that what he teaches could no more be repudiated than if God himself said it. For God's word remains eternally, and our preaching is indeed God's word, as we take it out of the prophets and the apostles and set forth to you [our hearers]. Thus, we can boldly say, "If anyone is preaching to you a gospel contrary to that which you received let him be accursed." [Gal. 1:9]¹²

To be certain of the message the preacher, however, must study the Scriptures and be faithful to them. Therefore, Spangenberg insisted that those who proclaim God's word must engage in regular Bible study in the original languages. The pastor's study of the Scriptures should begin with a recognition that the Bible is a book of wisdom which makes the wisdom of all other books look foolish since none of them teaches what eternal life is. Spangenberg then followed Luther's three-fold prescription for the study of the Scripture. First, the Bible student should begin with prayer. Second comes meditation. "Not only in the heart but also orally, go over the words and phrases again and again, read them and read them again, and diligently note and think over what the Holy Spirit means." Part of that meditation consists in preaching often, or listening to sermons often, and considering the Word as it is proclaimed to God's people. Third, the touchstone of biblical study is the spiritual struggle, the *Anfechtung*, that arises out of reading the Scriptures. For such struggle not only teaches us to know and understand. It also teaches

us to experience "how correct, how true, how sweet, how lovely, how powerful, how comforting God's word is, as the wisdom over all other wisdom." In moving from the words of Scripture to the proclamation of their message the rule of faith guides the preacher and prevents the introduction of new teachings or misleading expressions.¹³

In 1560 the counts of Mansfeld had issued an order for its consistory. It prescribed that each church should have for its pastor "a Latin and a German Bible, an Agenda or Church Order, Luther's catechism and the Nuremberg catechism, the Augsburg Confession and its Apology, Melanchthon's *Loci Communes* in Latin and German, the pamphlet of Urbanus Rhegius on how one should properly preach."¹⁴ Spangenberg undoubtedly concurred with this list of basic tools which should guide the pastor's study of the Word.

The Characteristics of the Pastor

The Pauline letters provided Spangenberg with opportunities to comment on the personal characteristics which the pastor should possess. In two sermons on Titus 1:6-10 Spangenberg set forth the expectations which he believed the congregation should have of the personal life of its pastors. He should be blameless in his own household since he is the head of the household of the church. Neither polygamy nor celibacy is proper for the pastor; he should be the husband of one wife, for six reasons. God had commanded it, and he had set this order for life in his law. The pastor's marriage depicts the mystery of the relationship between Christ and his bride, the church. Preachers should avoid every suspicion of unchastity. They should avoid disunity and envy within the household, something, Spangenberg observed, which would be more difficult if the pastor had more than one wife. Finally, the preacher can learn much regarding the marriages of his parishioners and the conduct of a household if he is married himself.

Preacher's children should be believers. Himself a father, Spangenberg reminded his hearers and readers that pastors' infants will reflect their fallen nature and love nothing better than that which is harmful; they, too will grab for knives, needles, light, and fire.

They will exhibit pride, envy, and hate. They will blame others when they have done wrong and cry when they are accused so that they can persuade their parents that they are innocent. Pastors and their wives must discipline their children and teach them the fear of God through the Catechism. Nonetheless, Spangenberg conceded, the devil often corrupts the children of pious parents. Pastors should also train their children to display a sense of propriety in the kind of clothing and jewelry they wear and also in eating and drinking. They should be obedient, not stubborn, obstinate, and headstrong, as Eli's sons were (Syrach 30:1-13; 1 Sam. 2:11-17).

Preachers themselves should present a blameless life to their congregations. They should not be headstrong and always insist on their own way. "That is a sign of a crude ass, and such people cannot do anything else but create disunity and destroy all social intercourse." Anger, drunkenness, sharpness of tongue are all unbecoming a pastor. "It is necessary for the pastor sometimes to sharply condemn wrong in nobles and subjects alike, but such condemnation should be delivered in a straightforward manner, without bitter, mocking, offensive words." Finally, the preacher should avoid carelessness in the conduct of his responsibilities.

Paul instead commends the way of life outlined in the ten commandments by listing six attributes of the bishop. They include hospitality, or meeting the needs of others; kindness and gentleness toward all; self-discipline, reasonableness, and moderation; uprightness of life; holiness (which Spangenberg interpreted as a concern for the affairs of God and his church); and chastity. Finally — Spangenberg's frequent refrain — pastors will also be diligent in teaching the truth to the people, who are easily deceived.¹⁵

Paul had admonished Titus to be "a man of sound speech that cannot be censured" in 2:8. For Spangenberg, this phrase meant first of all that the preacher would present unfalsified teaching. False teaching might be characterized as that of the ancient heretics, such as Marcion, Cerdon, or Manes; that of the papists; that of the antinomians, who taught that the preaching of the law should be

banned from the pulpit; and that of those who wanted to employ Aristotle, the monks, and the scholastics. The preacher should furthermore be bold and forthright in his preaching and should therefore avoid being inconsistent, praising one day and condemning the next. He should avoid provocative and offensive talk regarding spiritual matters. He should not use the fables and legends which medieval writers and preachers so often employed in the pulpit.¹⁶

"Sound speech" also meant that the pastor should proclaim God's word so that the consciences and hearts of his hearers might be put at peace, that they might grow and mature in faith, and that they might learn how to live a godly life in their estate and calling. It is not sound, Spangenberg insisted, when those who are weak in faith are always pelted with rebuke and driven to despair. Therefore, the pastor dare not teach everyone in his congregation in the same manner. Distinctions must be made between the older and the younger, those with more understanding and those with less understanding. The pastor can teach the word correctly without teaching it in a salutary fashion. For his message to be salutary also for the common people the pastor must carefully consider how to present God's word in one way to those who are troubled and in a different way to those who are secure and presumptuous in their sins. The presentation of the law takes on a sterner, more forceful tone when it is directed at the impudent, wild young people of the congregation than when it is directed to the older people. The pastor should use a gentler approach when preaching the law to the governing authorities than when addressing the common crowd if he wants to accomplish something (a rule which Spangenberg did not seem to follow at some points in his own preaching). Storming and scolding at any of one's hearers may be counterproductive, for such cursing and pounding may only embitter their hearts and not improve the situation but make it worse. Whether correct or incorrect teaching is employed in this manner makes little difference. Hearts will not be healed. Of course, Spangenberg reminded his readers, they will also not be healed if the

proclamation in the congregation is always sweet and never rebukes sin and calls for repentance.¹⁷

Pastors and Their People

The relationship between clergy and laity has seldom been untroubled in the history of the church. Such was certainly the case in the peasant villages and small towns of the late medieval period. The anticlericalism which some claim as a chief characteristic of the early Reformation period did not disappear with the establishment of Lutheran reform.¹⁸ Spangenberg addressed the problems and questions surrounding the power of the preacher as he treated Paul's discussion of similar problems in his own relationship with the Corinthian Christians (1 Cor. 1:24, "Not that we lord it over your faith; we work with you for your joy.")

Several situations might lead to tension over the power of the pastor. Sharp rebuke of the unrepentant, the imposition of excommunication, threatening to withhold the sacrament from someone who refused to repent, the call to live a disciplined and faithful Christian life could all create conflict for the pastor who was carrying out his responsibilities. At such moments could come the accusations that the preacher was trying to interfere with the temporal sphere of life and take the upper hand over all of life. At other times the peasants might object to the pastor's prescribing what they should believe or how they should act in regard to spiritual matters. Often they would assert that the pastor was becoming a tyrant over their consciences when he condemned drinking brandy on Sundays, and then they would stand in front of the church making mischief.

But it was not only peasants who could resist the preaching of God's Word. Spangenberg was particularly sensitive to the devil's using princes and counts, wise and learned jurists ("evil Christians," he called them), and "weak and wavering theologians" as well as the common crowd to resist and condemn the pastor's application of God's word to their lives.¹⁹ He condemned those who withhold the pastor's salary as an expression of their contempt for their pastor.²⁰

He reminded his hearers and readers that preachers cannot force people to accept God's word and confess the faith. God alone can do that. Preachers have only the power of the word against both unbelief and evil living. The power of the preacher consists in revealing sin, rebuking it, and calling the sinner to repentance. In season and out of season the power of the pastor consists in reminding hearers what it means to be a Christian and in urging in a serious but sensitive manner that the hearers live out their faith.

Spangenberg pointed out that Paul did not try to exercise tyranny over the Corinthians, but instead he worked with them, showing his fatherly love and concern. The burden of the hearers' sins weighs heavily upon a pastor. The true caregiver of souls is always worrying about keeping his people on the right path of life. Like the distress of a father who has to cut an infection out of his dear little boy, it hurts the pastor to rebuke his people even though at times sharp rebuking is indeed necessary. The preacher must simply be certain that he does so out of love for his people, not out of frustration or hate. When his rebuke results in repentance, both the pastor and the angels of heaven rejoice.²¹

Commenting on Paul's treatment of the person who had caused offense in the Corinthian congregation (2 Cor. 2:5-8), Spangenberg laid out his understanding of excommunication. The entire intent of Paul's instructions regarding this couple is to bring them to repentance that they might escape God's punishment. Spangenberg believed that the ancient bishops had been too harsh in prescribing three or seven years repentance before full restoration to the community of the congregation. Paul's admonition that the Corinthians "prove your love for him" reminds Christians that they should embrace the repentant sinner immediately. For God accepts the sinner at the moment of repentance. Fellow believers must be concerned that the repentant sinner not fall into despair.

Spangenberg recognized the psychological dimension of reconciliation with those who have committed public sins and perhaps have also been excommunicated. He resisted the temptation to take

care of the reconciliation of such sinners outside the view of the congregation. For they need the power which public reconciliation can give. Public, coarse sinners desire secret reconciliation. They

are ashamed, and think that if they could sneak the absolution secretly from the church, it would not make much difference later whether or not they had sought public absolution for the public offense they had given the church. But indeed they finally discover the worm of conscience and God's stern rebuke against the pride of such sinners who want to justify their wickedness and have contempt for all of God's threats. They hope to avoid they know not what kind of disgrace [which stems from] their great dishonor of God and the offense given to many people, and so they seek a small, inadequate covering for their sins, which they do not want to confess and have revealed to everyone. They pay no attention to how seriously others may be offended by that and may be driven to commit the same sins. Therefore, on the Last Day their great disgrace and their eternal harm will be revealed to all creatures and they will suffer evil.

Spangenberg outlined procedures for excommunication. It should not be undertaken, "as it was under the papacy," in a frivolous way but rather with serious thought and sensitivity. The congregation should not excommunicate without its pastor, the one who cares for souls in its midst, nor should the pastor proceed to excommunicate without the approval of the congregation. "By congregation, I do not mean the raw, wild mob, which is concerned about neither virtues nor sins ... but the elders, those with understanding, the godly and honorable in the congregation." Spangenberg did not define how to determine who these people are. He did not indicate that only those who held certain responsibilities in the congregation should assume a role in excommunication. Excommunication should be undertaken only for proper reasons. It should not involve a powerplay by the people of the congregation but should always be done in Christ's stead, according to his command. Its intent should always be that sinners not remain in Satan's clutches but should be freed through the absolution. Excommunication is imposed to elicit the desire to be absolved.²²

The Office of Hearer

Spangenberg also treated the expectations which he had of his "hearers," the members of his congregation, in treating Paul's letters.

In so doing he revealed a great deal about village or small town life in the period. He discussed the "office of hearer" in connection with his analysis of the office of the preacher in commenting on 1 Thessalonians 2:9-16. He found twenty-one characteristics of the pastoral office; the office of hearer could be summarized in four. Hearers are to hold their pastor in honor and to provide for his needs. They are to listen to God's word. They are to receive God's word and trust it. They are to let God work in them and set aside sin, unbelief, and ingratitude.²³ The first of these points was of particular concern to Spangenberg. He later noted that "all sorts of misfortune in the towns and villages come from contempt for the person of teacher [pastor] and his office and preaching." If "the common people and hearers" regard their pastors with friendly and loving hearts, their pastors will devote themselves to their responsibilities with energy and dedication, he insisted.²⁴

Spangenberg expected that his people would hear the word in regular worship services and would study the word on their own when that was possible, that is, when at least one member of the family was literate. His sermon on 1 Timothy 2:1-4 contains a description of the daily worship opportunities in Mansfeld county. The day began in "many places" in the county with morning prayer, at which a psalm was sung, a collect prayed, and then the hymn "Lord, Keep Us Steadfast in Your Word" was sung. Following the prayer for peace, the people went to work. At evening they could assemble again, as it began to get dark, thank God together for the blessings of the day and to pray for his protection during the night. In other places there was only the ringing of the bell at the beginning of the day, to remind the people of the village that all Christians need to begin the day with prayer. In some villages the people came together for common prayer and catechetical instruction in the evening.²⁵

Spangenberg also presumed that his people would be praying at home. All Christians should pray "not only with the congregation in the church but also at home, each person by himself, that God grant that his word takes its course and progresses with its blessings

through us."²⁶ Preachers and hearers, governing officials and subjects, parents and children, and neighbors should all pray for one another.²⁷ For "prayer is the best medicine against all our desires not to do that to which we are called which we may encounter in our daily callings. When we pray diligently to God in faith, he gives us all the more wisdom so that we make best use of our time, and our hope is increased and our patience strengthened through it."²⁸

Spangenberg commented almost not at all about the conduct of Sunday worship in these homiletical commentaries, but he did offer a few glimpses into the frustrations and hopes of the preacher of the time regarding Sunday worship. Too many parishioners regarded attendance at worship as merely "an old-fashioned, outward custom, just as is going to the market on Saturday." Some even believed that if one person from a household worshipped, that sufficed for the entire family.²⁹ Regarding those who did come to worship, Spangenberg had to complain that some members of the congregation did not remain for the entire sermon or for the general prayer. He suggested that preachers should perhaps call them by name as they leave the church to teach them some sense of shame.³⁰ Hearers who do not understand something in the sermon should ask their preacher for instruction on the matter, Spangenberg urged. That had been the custom of the early church, he explained, and he believed that this custom should be followed in his day. For above all the preacher's responsibility is to teach his hearers the word of God.³¹

Spangenberg believed that his hearers needed to be engaged with God's word in their homes as well, to the extent that Bible reading was possible for them. Hearers who could read — "or who have servants or children who can" — were to read or have those who could read provide the rest of the household with a reading of the appointed texts for the coming Sunday, preferably on Saturday. In that way the hearers would have some familiarity with the lessons and would have thought about them before the sermon. That would make it easier to absorb what the preacher said. After the sermon the family should hear the text again so that it might better be held in mind.

Such a reading of the text on Sunday afternoon would refresh the content of the sermon in the hearer's memory.³² The ideal of family meditation, which Luther wanted to set in place in his Small Catechism, remained part of the program which his followers tried to cultivate in the piety of their people.³³

Paul's recollection of the history of Israel in 1 Corinthians 10 gave Spangenberg the occasion to direct the attention of parents and all Christians to the reading of history. Even the histories of the heathen are profitable and beneficial, he commented, for moving people to practice virtue and upright behavior and to hate sin and wickedness. But the Books of Moses offer lessons more noble, beautiful and edifying than those in any other history books apart from the Gospels. Reading them strengthens faith in Christ and gives assurance that biblical teaching is true, certain, and God-pleasing. Such reading also warns us against sinning.³⁴ In the ideal Lutheran home Bible reading would be a regular part of the family's life together.

Spangenberg sharply criticized parents who failed to care for their children with all God had provided and neglected them while they were carousing themselves.³⁵ Above all, he was concerned that parents train their children in the word of the Lord. Although he reiterated Paul's prohibition of women in the pastorate, he insisted that wives are indeed obligated to teach their children and servants in the home.³⁶

Virtue and Vice in the Congregation of God's People

At many points in the epistles which he interpreted, Spangenberg found occasion to comment on the vices or virtues of his hearers. Although these catalogs of vices and failings or of godly deeds and practices are somewhat determined by the Pauline text, they also give a glimpse into the life of the German town of the time. In treating the sins of his hearers Spangenberg displayed some pastoral sensitivity to the struggles and temptations of the Christian life. He sharply condemned those who boast that they are hearers of God's word and

partakers of the sacrament, but who do not care whether they do good or evil, whether they are living a pure and upright life. They will go the way of Israel as Paul described it in 1 Corinthians 10:1-13. God will not tolerate those who pursue fleshly freedom and security. But Spangenberg also reminded his hearers that they should take comfort in the gospel of Christ. They would not earn their salvation with good works, for their works would never be perfect. They should simply do good works in their calling, whether perfect or marred with various infirmities. Such a life God tolerates and regards as good.³⁷ On the other hand, because human creatures are born in sin, they often regard their sins as righteous deeds. Therefore, believers should practice frequent examination and confession of sins. Confession is the best protection against sin, Spangenberg suggested.³⁸

Romans 6:23, "the wages of sin is death," gave the preacher occasion to define and list sins. "Unbelief is the source of all sins," Spangenberg began, in good Lutheran fashion. From it come first of all a number of sins against God:

idolatry, arrogance, security, false worship, spiritual pride, ambition, unreasonableness, contempt, obstinacy, presumption, impatience, doubt, apostasy, denial, slander of God, sorcery, false teaching, schism.

With "cursing, swearing, and perjury" Spangenberg turned to sins against the neighbor and continued,

adultery, lying, sacrilege, falsification and suppression of the truth, hypocrisy, laziness in one's calling, idleness, impertinence, disobedience, revolt, mutiny, rebellion, insolence, impudence, willfulness, holding a grudge, animosity, anger, hate, envy, quarrelsomeness, brawling, seeking revenge, dissension, murder, manslaughter, tyranny, defiance, bloodthirstiness, pride, arrogance, pomposity, wanton display of luxury, overeating, boozing, carousing, debauchery, fornication, impurity, prostitution, adultery [note, the second time in the list], disgraceful deeds, greed, usury, deception, taking unfair advantage, disregard of others, selfishness, unfairness, use of violence, oppression of the poor, lack of mercy, slander, betrayal, lying, cunning, and the like.³⁹

Spangenberg's list of sins falls roughly into place along the outline of the Ten Commandments. He expanded on the practice of some of

these sins as he observed them in comments on a number of passages in Paul's letters.

In commenting on Titus 2:2, "bid the older men to be temperate, serious, sensible, sound in faith, in love, and in steadfastness," Spangenberg set forth a basis for his expectations for Christian living in his congregation, not just for older men but for all. They should be sound in faith, trusting utterly in God's promise, as they experience the work of the Holy Spirit in terrifying their consciences through the law and comforting them through the gospel in absolution. They should avoid doubt of God's word, trust in self, every heresy and error, failure to confess the faith and to pray in faith. They should also be sound in love for all their neighbors, and sound in patience or steadfastness, a problem which Spangenberg believed was particularly acute for the older people since they had more anxieties and adversities.⁴⁰

Spangenberg was preaching only a little more than a generation after Luther's Reformation had been introduced into Mansfeld county. He was still battling against remnants of the old religion, and occasionally he noted that in these sermons. His occasional attack on papalist custom, such as communion in one kind, suggests that he was very much aware of the problems of an earlier generation; the fact that such attacks occur relatively seldom suggests that much of the battle against formal aspects of medieval religion had been won. At the same time the old superstitious practices persisted. This is reflected in Spangenberg's comments on 2 Corinthians 7:1, "let us cleanse ourselves from every defilement of body and spirit and make holiness perfect in the fear of God":

It is not yet a cleansing when a person no longer practices idolatry or sorcery and indeed does not offend others in any other way in an outward manner. It is not yet clean when one leads an irreproachable and honorable life in the view of others and still has idolatry inwardly, [depending on] a consecrated herb, a bush which bestows protection [Wermut streuchlin], or the blessing of an old woman, and similar foolish things, as such people still unfortunately do. Their spirits are still contaminated. Especially when they are sick or have someone sick in their families, they accept and use all sorts

of superstitious remedies, which are against God and against nature. It is really a foolish thing to lay nine different kinds of wood under the sick person without his knowing it to counteract a fever. Likewise, it is foolish to think that medicine will be effective when the sick person does not know he has taken it, but that it will be ineffective if he does know. And what more kinds of craziness are there, for which we have no word of God nor natural proof, and therefore let the devil lead us around under false appearances.

Therefore, not everything is clean which has true faith and knowledge of God. When such a person still, to please the godless, supports the conduct of false worship, vigils, masses for the dead, and similar papalist ceremonies, even though such a person is clean in spirit, his flesh or body is certainly defiled. ...

Therefore we should proceed with sanctification, which has been begun in our baptism.⁴¹

Remnants of the old faith and of popular superstition did not ban a hearer in Spangenberg's congregation from the church. It was one of those problems of sin which he could understand, but against which he was determined to fight.

Spangenberg attacked astrology in commenting on Romans 9, but he did not indicate that the people of his congregation were engaging in astrological practices. He told of a French woman who had sent an emissary to Wilsnack, north of Mansfeld, in Brandenburg, in 1551 to get a special letter of indulgence which was offered at the shrine which had been established there after a host had survived the burning of the church building in 1383. The emissary had visited Spangenberg and given him the occasion to note such superstition was still alive and well. But he did not warn his own people against going to Wilsnack, apparently because the temptation to do so had long since died out in Mansfeld.⁴²

The Calling of Family Life

Family life was of utmost importance for Spangenberg, and his sermons on Paul's letters reflect the ideas that he developed at

greater length in his *Sermons for the Bride*, a massive homiletical effort of some seventy sermons on marriage and family. He condemned those whose restlessness and self-centeredness led them to pay no attention to their wife and children, or to their parents, brothers, sisters and friends.⁴³

Titus 2:4-5 gave opportunity to discuss the virtues of the young wife in what Spangenberg called a picture of "the golden ring of a Christian wife." Her modesty is her most precious jewel. She should love her husband, doing what pleases him (Syrach 25:2, 26:16-19). Brides think that they could never not love their husbands, but the devil and original sin take their toll, Spangenberg warned. The lasting love of spouses for each other is not a human work which lies within the power of the human will. It is a work of the Holy Spirit and should be encouraged not only by the preacher but also by older women in the home. Augustine's mother Monica serves as a good example of love for the spouse. Young wives should also love their children. That means first of all that they teach them the fear of God by instructing them in the catechism and in Christian teaching and faith. For children are created in the image of God and redeemed through Christ's precious blood. They are a greater blessing than all other temporal gifts. Therefore, parents must be careful not to love them inordinately and indulge them. The young wife is also to be modest, reasonable, and chaste. It is best if she stays at home and does not run around the town, from street to street and house to house. Managing the household, overseeing the servants, and supervising the kitchen, cellar, and barns should keep wives busy. Finally, the good wife is subject to her husband in that mystical relationship which Paul described in Ephesians 5:22-24.

Titus 2:6-8 permitted Spangenberg to address young husbands in his next sermon. His discussion was again somewhat determined by the text before him. Nonetheless, Spangenberg probably welcomed the chance to begin with the virtue of self-control, for that enabled him to criticize "stinking brandy and boozing at night, too many mugs of beer or glasses of wine." Imbibing weakens the strength of the

young man, burdens his heart, injures his brain, and makes him sick all over. Drinking produces other sins: cursing, swearing, abusive language, lying, gambling, and cheating at cards. Young husbands should also be honorable, patient, holy. They should love their wives and remain faithful to them. They should love their children, raise them in the fear of God, guide them toward a good education or an honorable trade. They should teach their children the catechism and also how to take care of themselves and provide themselves with food and clothing. The good husband pays attention to his household and runs it well. He is not a lion or a bear at home.⁴⁴

Spangenberg tried to reinforce those customs which were designed to preserve order and place in society. As in every society parents worried about the sexual temptations which confront their youth. Spangenberg warned against wild dancing at night, shameful games, women and girls voluptuously parading about. He objected to evenings with extended gluttony, all sorts of drinking, wild Italian dancing, with hopping, jumping, leaping, twirling, kissing and slobbering over each other, and running about in the costumes of the Tartars, the Turks, the Spanish, and the Muscovites.⁴⁵ Young unmarried women should not dress the same way in which young wives dressed, and older women should not dress in the same way that the young dress. All should avoid shameful "Turkish, Spanish, French, and devilish clothing." Spangenberg objected to older women adorning themselves and showing off in fancy fashion "with spangles, lace, ribbons, fancy bonnets, fancy fingernails and fancy locks [Krallen or Krollen], and necklaces, and with bright, expensive, prideful clothes." They give themselves a bad reputation, and they give the younger women and girls a bad example.⁴⁶ Spangenberg also expressed concern that the wives of the town not give themselves to idle chatter. He told the story of two neighbors who just a few years before, in 1557, had fallen into an argument over a hen. Their husbands joined the argument, and the one stabbed the other. The former was executed for the murder, and the two women were left with only their shame and blame. Spangenberg also complained that

some wives were teaching their children and servants evil things, including sorcery, prostitution, adultery, licentiousness. Some had their servants simply for their own pleasure; such women should be put in a sack and thrown into the nearest pond, Spangenberg suggested. Others taught their daughters fables, silly riddles and questions, superstitious blessings, and idolatrous prayers, while still others trained their daughters and female servants to be disobedient to men. Wives should instead serve as good examples for the young.⁴⁷

The Calling to Economic Service

Spangenberg admonished his hearers and readers to be content with their lot in life. "Titles, honors, and high position are necessary, as is distinction in estate, upon this earth," he was certain. To strive against the social order or to dedicate oneself to attaining a higher station could only be harmful, he believed, and sinful as well, especially when it is based on ambition and works to the disadvantage of the neighbor. Paul admonishes remaining in one's calling in Romans 12:16-17, Spangenberg taught, and doing what God has laid upon us. Those who have positions of power must be careful not to become puffed up with pride and have contempt for others. The poor, of a lower station in life, should thank God for what he has given them and be content with it.⁴⁸

Because his people did not always heed this admonition, and for various other reasons, interpersonal relationships in the village or small town did not always run smoothly. Spangenberg condemned general wickedness in his "chain of depravity" with examples from maltreatment of others, including tossing a beggar into the mud, stabbing a neighbor's animal, or throwing something into the brook to spite the local authorities. The last instance probably reflects continuing peasant anger over the seizure of brooks, as well as woods and meadowlands, by nobles as Roman law had been introduced at the

turn of the century. Spangenberg condemned bitterness as a "poisonous worm" which could give rise to such sins.⁴⁹

Although they comprised but a small minority among his hearers and the hearers of his prospective readers, Spangenberg devoted a good deal of effort to calling the high and mighty to repentance. Certain interpersonal tensions could be attributed more to higher social orders than to the lower. Quarrels and disputes break out more often among lawyers and administrative types, as Spangenberg could demonstrate with a number of examples. Some lawyers pull evil tricks, for instance, changing dates in a contract or shading over facts in court.⁵⁰ Spangenberg also urged a general pattern of modesty and propriety upon jurists, administrators, princely councilors and the like. Too often, he noted, the mayor, judges, and council members of a town presented an example of drunkenness, which set a bad example for the youth, ruined their own bodies, and brought on illnesses. The need for public modesty among the tonesetters extended to dress and speech as well.⁵¹

Merchants came in for criticism from Spangenberg.⁵² From his research into the career of the Florentine reformer of the late fifteenth century, Giralomo Savonarola, Spangenberg drew the story of Pietro de Medici, who put his hope in riches and lost it all, spending ten years in poverty and finally drowning. The moral of his story is that the wealthy should put their hope in the living God, not in riches (Jer. 17:5-8) and avoid financial deals, usury, deceit, putting on airs, gluttony, and drunkenness. Instead, they should be rich in good works appropriate to their calling, avoid unnecessary expenses, and should give to the poor (2 Cor. 9:6-7). Spangenberg recalled the story of Paulineus, bishop of Nola, from Augustine's *City of God*. The bishop knew where his true treasure lay, and so he told the invading Goths where his money and property were located as they came to plunder.⁵³ Spangenberg especially commended almsgiving to all.⁵⁴

Like Luther and almost all his contemporaries Spangenberg adamantly opposed lending money at interest, usury. He regarded it as a new practice and expressed his belief that it would consume

money and there would not be much left if it continued for long. He rejected any charging of interest because it gave unfair advantage to the lender over the borrower, and because those who practice it set their rates unfairly. Usury displays a total absence of brotherly love. Borrowing without interest can ruin a person as well, Spangenberg believed, so he counseled that Christians not borrow or lend unless absolutely necessary. Christians should not lend money unless they are willing to lose it in love.

Spangenberg condemned a number of related economic abuses. As examples of cheating he cited the raising of prices when goods were transported to another land; buying on credit and selling the product for more in cash; extorting higher prices from people in dire need; concluding a deal on goods which the seller does not have in his possession and then finding them at a lower price in order to sell them at a higher; buying the goods of someone who needs money below fair market value; making a product wet in order to charge more; changing a product's color to make it more attractive and thus higher in price; abandoning mortgaged property which does not cover the full price of a loan; obtaining a monopoly from the emperor and using it to take advantage of the neighbor. To what extent Spangenberg was here addressing the sins which his own people committed and to what extent these were practices of which the Mansfelder were victims is unclear. Since he was not only preaching these sermons for his own people but also recording them for distribution throughout Evangelical Germany, he may well have been thinking as much of the big city traders as the small town merchants in this section.⁵⁵

Spangenberg also had counsel for servants in the homes of merchants and artisan families and for the peasants caught in the system of serfdom. He commended the servant who looks beyond what he or she is being paid to serve the master as if serving Christ himself. Servanthood and serfdom stem from sin. Such limitations on human freedom are a punishment for sin. The jurists, in the Institutes of the Justinian Code book, taught that serfdom is opposed to nature, but that is not the case after the fall. It is a sign of God's special

grace that not all are serfs or slaves. Nonetheless, Christians can cheerfully assume the role of serf or servant and serve both God and their human masters in such callings.⁵⁶ Apart from general warnings against laziness and idleness Spangenberg did not single out serfs and servants for special criticism or admonition. But to all Christians he urged a life which avoided idleness and which devoted itself to the needs of the neighbor, unlike the lives of the monks under the papacy.⁵⁷ Spangenberg expressed a work ethic which takes second place to none in terms of the industry and dedication it requires in fulfilling God's callings in daily life.

In addressing merchants and other hearers as well Spangenberg commented on the necessity of arranging one's last will and testament according to God's commands. Wills should be made with the help of the proper legal officials, he counseled, and Christians should consult Tobit 4 for the proper form.⁵⁸

The Callings of Rulers and Subjects

Romans 13:1-7 imposed upon the commentator the task of analyzing the relationships between subjects and rulers and the responsibilities of each. Spangenberg echoed Luther's insistence on rulers' respect for both God and their subjects. Political authority is a part of God's good order for human life; it is not an estate of the devil or of human invention, Spangenberg argued. But obedience is not due the wicked commands of rulers; to suggest that would be a coarse and shameful error, according to Spangenberg. He combined a sharp critique of evil rulers, particularly of their ingratitude toward those who occupied the office of pastor, with praise for the authorities who preserved righteousness and uprightness in the community as God's servants. At the same time Spangenberg placed upon subjects the obligation of paying taxes and giving honor and obedience to the earthly rulers whom God had placed over them.⁵⁹

Spangenberg went into great detail on the duties of political

officials. God had given them their office to protect their subjects, especially those who needed that protection most. The ruler was to preserve order and make good policies for those of every station in life, merchants, artisans, servants and day laborers, for where such order does not exist, poverty reigns. Rulers should conduct trials personally and not entrust them to councilors, "especially not to those foreigners, who are godless enemies of the pastors, who have contempt for the sacrament, who are masters at torture, who are liars and usurers," undoubtedly a comment reflecting experiences which Spangenberg and other Gnesio-Lutherans had had with princely bureaucrats.⁶⁰

Among his many concerns regarding the civil estate was Spangenberg's fear that rulers would fail to execute justice properly, sometimes letting rascals get away with crimes, sometimes punishing the criminals too harshly. Rulers were to mete out punishment in the fear of God, with neither undue haste nor undue delay. Punishment was not to be more severe than was deserved, nor should it be influenced by the feelings of the judge; old hatred or desire for revenge must be banished from the judge's mind. Punishment should be exacted at the proper time and with reason. Whole villages should not be made to suffer for the mischief of one rascal. Finally, the law should govern the punishment.⁶¹

Throughout his career Spangenberg displayed little fear of princes. He felt free to condemn the sins of the mighty against their subjects, such as the military commanders "who regard poor people as no better than frogs."⁶¹ Therefore, he did not hesitate to advise that political authorities abandon certain practices which harm the poor. He specifically mentioned disunity among local officials, reflecting the impact of continuing quarrels among the counts of Mansfeld in his own area. One of these disputes had summoned Luther to Eisleben in 1546 — and the rigors of the trip caused his death. Unnecessary wars and overly ambitious building projects were also singled out as particularly burdensome on the poor. Furthermore, rulers should not overtax their subjects and should not

tamper with the fair value of their coinage. They should not displace the poor from their lands and use them as mortgage to their own financial interests. Spangenberg recognized the very real burdens of the political system in which he lived, and he brought the law of God to bear on the rich and the powerful.

Spangenberg condemned rulers who use price controls and monopolies to gouge the poor through the sale of meat, bread, beer, and other products, and he condemned the enclosure of community meadows for the princes, who by means of such practices sought their own profit through new ventures in raising sheep. Spangenberg attributed most of the evils of the day to wicked servants at court. Some of them were common criminals, murderers, adulterers, whoremongers, usurers, and so forth. In any case, no good can come of giving courtiers the power to initiate policy, Spangenberg believed. They should not be allowed to escape their fair share of the tax burden or to place arbitrary demands upon the rulers' subjects for labor in their own behalf. Above all, they should not be allowed to ride off on the hunt, ruining gardens, vineyards, and grain fields.

Spangenberg had written a tract against abuses of the nobles' hunt, and in his "chain of depravity" in Romans 1 he attacked the godless hunters, who wantonly rage through the vineyards, gardens and grain of their subjects and the poor with their horses and dogs, not in God's name but screaming and cursing like possessed people. And if a poor man says a word about it, they pull out their guns, curse by the hand of God and the five wounds [of Christ — a common late medieval curse], shoot and strike, threaten, and if they feel they can get away with it, actually commit atrocities against the poor people.

Shortly thereafter Spangenberg returned to criticize the abuse of the hunt as an example of lack of mercy. He called the nobles "the devil's hunting hounds, who consume all that the poor people have to eat ... " and threatened them with God's pronouncement of death upon the unmerciful. This condemnation is developed much more elaborately in Spangenberg's *Devil of the Hunt*.⁶³

Conclusion

As in every age it is not clear to what extent those rulers who heard or read Spangenberg's commentaries took to heart what he preached. The study of sermons and commentaries cannot determine such questions of influence and impact. What a reading of Spangenberg's Pauline commentaries does give us is a glimpse at life in a sixteenth century Lutheran town through the eyes of its preacher, the one who there proclaimed the word of the Lord, and who regarded his people, his hearers, as his children, placed under his care by God. He viewed their lives within the context of Luther's understanding of God's three structures for human life and of the Christian's callings within them. His picture is not that of a perfect world. With a Lutheran doctrine of sin, he was realistic rather than idealistic about himself, his fellow pastors, and his parishioners.

As a disciple of Luther, Spangenberg looked at his world through the lenses of law and gospel. He did so with some psychological sensitivity and a theological sensitivity to the needs of this people. Cyriacus Spangenberg proclaimed God's word as a firm but gentle father of his hearers.

Notes

1. *Die Epistel S. Paulj an Titum. Aussegelegt durch M. Ciriacum Spangenberg* (Strassburg: Samuel Emmel, 1564), iij^{r-v}; cf. xiiij^r. Spangenberg noted the use of the metaphor of father and children elsewhere in Paul's epistles, e.g. *Die ander Epistel Paulj an die Corinthier. Aussegelegt ...* (Strassburg: Samuel Emmel, 1563), cxxv^v, ccv^r, and *Die erste vnd andere Episteln des heyligen Apostels S. Pauli and die Thessalonicher. Auff's verstaendlichst aussgeleift vnd verklaeret ...* (Strassburg: Samuel Emmel, 1564), liij^r. For a recent study of Lutheran definitions of the pastoral office in

this period, see Jürgen Beyer, "Bischof Niels Palladius und das Selbstverständnis Lutherischer Pastoren um die Mitte des 16. Jahrhunderts," *Schriften des Vereins für Schleswig-Holsteinische Kirchengeschichte* II. Reihe, 45 (1992):25-41. Cf. also Hans-Christoph Rublack, "Der Wohlgeplagte Priester," Vom Selbstverständnis lutherischer Geistlichkeit im Zeitalter der Orthodoxie," *Zeitschrift für historische Forschung* 16 (1989):1-30.

2. *Ibid.*, v^r.

3. See Gustaf Wingren, *Luther on Vocation*, trans. (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1957).

4. *Die erste Epistel Paulj an Timotheum. Ausgelegt vnd gepredigt ...* (Strassburg: Samuel Emmel, 1564), liij^r.

5. *Die erste Epistel S. Pauli an die Corinthier/ Gepredigt vnd Ausgelegt ...* (Frankfurt am Main: Weygand Han and Georg Raben, 1561), XLII^r, LV^r. Cf. similar comments on the honor of the office of the pastoral ministry, CXVIII^r, and in Spangenberg's *Ausslegung der Letsten Acht Capitel/ der Episteln S. PAVLI an die Roemer* (Strassburg, 1569), xxxj^r, cxiiij^r, cxl^r.

6. *Die Epistel an Titum*, lxxvij^v-lxxvij^r.

7. *Die ander Epistel Paulj an die Corinthier*, xlviij^r-xlix^r. A similar description of the pastoral office is found in *Die erste Epistel Paulj an Timotheum*, xxix^r.

8. *Die Epistel an Titum*, lxxvij^v-lxxvij^r.

9. *Die erste Episteln an die Thessalonicher*, xxviiiij^v-xxx^v.

10. *Die ander Epistel Paulj an die Corinthier*, lxviiiij^r-lxxj^r.

11. *Ausslegung der Letsten Acht Capitel*, cxxxix^r.

12. *Die ander Epistel Paulj an die Corinthier*, xviiiij^{r-v}.

13. *Die erste Epistel Paulj an Timotheum*, cxxij^v-cxxv^v.

14. *Die Evangelischen Kirchenordnungen des XVI. Jahrhunderts*, 1,2 (Leipzig:Reisland, 1904): 194.

15. *Die Epistel S. Paulj an Titum*, xvij^r-xxiiij^v.

16. *Ibid.*, liiiij^v-lvj^r.

17. *Ibid.*, lvj^{r-v}.

18. *Anticlericalism in Late Medieval and Early Modern Europe*, ed. Heiko A. Oberman and Peter Dykema (Leiden: Brill, 1992).

19. *Die ander Epistel Paulj an die Corinthier*, ccviiij^v. Cf. *Kirchenordnungen*, 1, 2: 240-43, for the regulations for excommunication laid down by the Agenda prepared in 1580, which probably reflects the earlier practice of the period of Spangenberg's ministry.

20. *Die erste Epistel an die Corinthier*, CXVII^r.

21. *Die ander Epistel Paulj an die Corinthier*, xxxiiij^r-xxxvj^v. Cf. *Die erste Epistel Paulj an Timotheum*, cxxviiij^{r-v}.

22. *Die ander Epistel Paulj an die Corinthier*, xxxvij^v-xlj^r. Cf. similar comments on Romans 12:9-11a, in *Auslegung der Letsten Acht Capitel*, cxcjr-cxcij^v, and on 1 Corinthians 5:5, in *Die erste Epistel an die Corinthier*, LXVI^{r-v}.

23. *Die erste Episteln an die Thessalonicher*, xxx^v. Cf. *Die ander Epistel Paulj an die Corinthier*, cxvj^{r-v}.

24. *Die erste Episteln an die Thessalonicher*, lj^v.

25. *Die erste Epistel Paulj an Timotheum*, xxx^v.

26. *Die ander Epistel Paulj an die Thessalonicher. Ausgelegt ...* (Strassburg: Samuel Emmel, 1564), xxx^v-xxxj^r.

27. *Die erste Epistel Paulj an Timotheum*, xlj^v.

28. *Auslegung der Letsten Acht Capitel*, cxcvij^v-cxcviii^r, on Romans 12:11b-13.

29. *Die erste Epistel an die Corinthier*, CXVIII^r.

30. *Die erste Epistel Paulj an Timotheum*, xxx^v. Erasmus Sarcerius, at the time superintendent of the churches of Mansfeld County and Spangenberg's colleague, had reflected similar concerns in the instructions for visitation which he had composed for the dukes of Mansfeld in 1554, *Kirchenordnungen* 1,2:191.

31. *Die ander Epistel an die Thessalonicher*, iij^v.

32. *Die erste Epistel Paulj an Timotheum*, cxxv^{r4}.

33. See, e.g., Robert Kolb, "Parents Should Explain the Sermon, Nikolaus von Amsdorf on the Role of the Christian

Parent." *Lutheran Quarterly* O.S. XXV,3 (1973) :231-240.

34. *Die erste Epistel an die Corinthier*, CXXXIII^r-CXXXIII^r.

35. *Die ander Epistel Paulj an die Corinthier*, ccv^v.

36. *Die erste Epistel Paulj an Timotheum*, xlv^r. Cf. *Die Epistel ... an Titum*, xlvij^v.

37. *Ibid.*, lxxv^v.

38. *Ibid.*, lxxj^v-lxxxij^r.

39. *Ausslegung der Ersten Acht Capitel der Episteln S. Pavli an der Roemer* (Strassburg: Samuel Emmel, 1566), ccxliiij^v-ccxli^v.

Cf. a similar "chain of depravity," a list of twenty-two sins built upon Paul's list of sins, Romans 1:28-32, *ibid.*, xlvj^r-l^r, and another similar, though briefer list in *Die Epistel an Titum*, lxxiiij^v.

40. *Ibid.*, lxxiiij^v.

41. *Die ander Epistel Paulj an die Corinthier*, cxxx^r-cxxxj^r.

Sarcerius provided an even more extensive catalog of superstitious practices which were still present, apparently, in the churches of Mansfeld, in his instructions for visitation, *Kirchenordnungen*, 1,2: 191-92.

42. *Ausslegung der Letsten Acht Capitel*, xv^r; *Die erste Epistel an die Corinthier*, CLXVII^v. A contemporary description of the shrine and of its destruction is found in Matthaeus Ludeus, *Historia Von der erfindung/ Wunderwercken vnd zerstoerung des vermeinten heiligen Beutszen Wilssnagk ...* (Wittenberg: Schleoich, 1586), esp. Riij^r. See also Ludwig Meier, "Wilsnack als Spiegel deutscher Vorreformation," *Zeitschrift für Religions- und Geistesgeschichte* 3 (1941): 53-60, and Philip M. Soergel, *Wondrous in His Saints, Counter-Reformation Propaganda in Bavaria* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993), 45-49.

43. *Ausslegung der Ersten Acht Capitel*, l^r. Spangenberg elaborated his views of marriage in his *Ehespiegel: Das ist / Alles was vom heyligen Ehestande/ nützlich/ noetiges / vnd trestliches mag gesagt werden. In Sibentzig Brautpredigten: zusammenverfasst* (Strassburg: Samuel Emmel, 1561).

44 *Die Epistel an Titum*, xlviiij^v-liiiij^v; cf. *Ausslegung der Letsten*

Acht Capitel, cclvj^r. Concerns over dancing and drinking were also expressed in the visitation instructions of Sarcerius, *Kirchenordnungen*, 1,2: 191.

45. *Die Epistel an Titum*, lxxxiiij^v-lxxxiiiij^r. Provocative male dress was criticized by Spangenberg's contemporary, Andreas Musculus, in his *Vom Hosen Teufel* (Frankfurt an der Oder: Johann Eichorn, 1565).

46. *Ibid.*, xlv^r-v.

47. *Ibid.*, xlv^v-xlviiiij^r.

48. *Ausslegung der Letsten Acht Capitel*, ccvj^v.

49. *Ausslegung der Ersten Acht Capitel*, xlvij^v, xlviiiij^v.

50. *Ibid.*, xlviiiij^r, xlix^v.

51. *Die Epistel an Titum*, xliij^r-v.

52. *Ausslegung der Ersten Acht Capitel*, xlix^v; cf. on greed, *Die erste Epistel Paulj an Timotheum*, clxxv^v.

53. *Ibid.*, clxxiiij^r-clxxiiiij^v; City of God, 1, x. Spangenberg's study of Savonarola is entitled *Historia. Vom Leben, Lere vnd Tode, Hieronymi Savonarole ...* (Wittenberg: Peter Seitz's heirs, 1556).

54. *Die ander Epistel Paulj an die Corinthier*, cxli^r-clix^r, *Die erste ... Episteln an die Thessalonicher*, xxxix^r.

55. *Ibid.*, xxxviiiij^r-xl^v. Sarcerius warned against usury in his instructions for visitation, *Kirchenordnungen*, 1,2:191.

56. *Die erste Epistel Paulj an Timotheum*, xj^v, cliij^r-clviiiij^r.

57. *Die ander Epistel an die Thessalonicher*, xxxiiiij^r-xxxvj^r.

58. *Die erste Episteln an die Thessalonicher*, xi^r.

59. *Ausslegung der Letsten Acht Capitel*, ccxviiiij^r-ccxliiiij^r.

60. *Ibid.*, ccl^r-v.

61. *Ibid.*, ccxlix^r-v.

62. *Ibid.*, ccl^v-cclj^v.

63. *Ausslegung der Ersten Acht Capitel*, j^r.

64. *Ibid.*, xlix^v.

Reaction

By: Prof. John Brenner

Thank you very much for inviting me to participate in your Twenty-sixth annual Reformation Lectures at Bethany. It is a privilege and an honor! I bring you warm and fraternal greetings from my colleagues at Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary. Thank you very much also for the topic you have chosen, "Studying the Bible under Luther: Luther's Influence on Cyriakus Spangenberg."

It has been said that the only people interested in the Gnesio-Lutherans are Gnesio-Lutherans. That is perhaps a bit of an overstatement. Yet it is true that compared with the early years of the Reformation this late-Reformation age has been under-researched and is consequently not well known or understood even by many modern confessional Lutherans. That is a shame. For understanding the Gnesio-Lutherans and their era is important for understanding later developments in Lutheranism. I thank Dr. Kolb for his continuing efforts to shed light on this important era of church history.

As you read these lectures, you cannot help but be impressed with influence of the University of Wittenberg and the educational efforts of Luther and Melancthon. Luther's commanding personality and his command of the Scriptures impressed all who came into contact with him. Melancthon was a master educator. He was known as the preceptor of Germany. His courses were often more popular than even Luther's. These two professors instilled in their students a love of learning that lasted a life time. That love of learning can be seen in Spangenberg's commentaries on the Scriptures, his work in the field of history and his other literary activities. In his efforts as an historian he traveled to search out primary sources, he did careful research and was widely read in the literature of his day. He was a scholar who had learned scholarship at Wittenberg. (*Cf.* Robert Kolb,

"Philipp's Foes, but Followers Nonetheless: Late Humanism Among the Gnesio-Lutherans," an essay contained in *The Harvest of Humanism in Central Europe: Essays in Honor of Lewis W. Spitz*, edited by Manfred P. Fleischer, Concordia Publishing House, 1992).

Spangenberg and his contemporaries at the University of Wittenberg also deeply imbibed the educational philosophy, hermeneutical principles, theological approach and spirit of their mentors. That school and its professors had a profound impact on the subsequent course of church history. We dare never underestimate the importance of our schools and solid theological training for the next generation of confessional Lutherans.

I believe that the influence of Luther can be seen particularly in Spangenberg's pastoral heart. As Dr. Kolb says at the end of Lecture III, "As a disciple of Luther, Spangenberg looked at his world through the lenses of law and gospel. He did so with some psychological sensitivity and a theological sensitivity to the needs of his people. Cyriakus Spangenberg proclaimed God's word as a *firm but gentle father of his hearers*." Spangenberg's pastoral heart and evangelical concern for souls are apparent in every aspect of his life and work under discussion.

The essayist has demonstrated that Spangenberg's purpose in presenting the doctrine of election was not to satisfy human curiosity or to display his theological acumen. He taught this doctrine as a comfort to repentant sinners. The scriptural teaching of election comforts us because it assures us that our salvation is in God's hands from first to last. God gives us that personal assurance in the means of grace, the gospel in word and sacraments.

On the other hand, speculation over why some are saved and not others has resulted in a multitude of errors. Those errors have led people to seek certainty of salvation in subjective experience rather than in the objective truths and promises of God's Word. Spangenberg emphasized those objective truths and promises. As Dr. Kolb has pointed out, "Although at points he (Spangenberg) let speculation lure him beyond the text of the epistle, this concern for comfort and for

anchoring the believer's life in the means of grace informed and directed his exposition of the text. He sought to teach a doctrine of predestination which could be preached for the comfort of God's elect children."

Luther's great gift to the church was his emphasis on the proper distinction between law and gospel. In his sermons and lectures Luther demonstrated the art of afflicting comfortable sinners and comforting the afflicted. People who attended his lectures and heard him preach left knowing that by nature they stood under God's wrath, and that they were saved by grace alone through faith in the atoning work of Jesus their Savior. As the essayist informs us, Luther's students recalled his sermons with joy and commented that they came back from his lectures filled with comfort and joy.

Spangenberg learned the art of distinguishing between law and gospel from Luther. He knew that only by properly distinguishing these two basic teachings of Scripture could his hearers grasp the comfort of God's forgiveness and have hope in the midst of earthly problems. Only by the proper application of the law and gospel could they grow in their Christian faith and life. Only by grasping the difference and distinction between the law and the gospel could they really understand the Scriptures.

That truth is important for us to remember today. The Reformed have never really understood the proper distinction between law and gospel. They deny the means of grace and a legalistic approach has been evident in their system from the time of Zwingli and Calvin to this day. Modern evangelicals in America have flooded religious bookstores with popular literature which confuses our people because it confuses law and gospel. As Confessional Lutherans in America, therefore, we will want to join Spangenberg in sitting at the feet of Luther to learn to distinguish properly these two main doctrines of the Bible in our sermons and teaching. It is essential for our own welfare and the spiritual welfare of the souls entrusted to our care.

Spangenberg emphasized the importance of Christian discipline. He knew that Christian love demands calling sinners to repentance.

Nothing is more loveless than allowing a person to continue in a sin. Nothing is more loving than reaching out in humility to call that sinner to repentance. Our modern pluralistic society with its relativistic approach to truth and morality is in dire need of pastors, teachers and laymen who are willing to take that Christian responsibility. We cannot ignore sin. For if people no longer recognize sin as damnable in God's eyes, who needs a Savior? Spangenberg's pastoral heart compelled him to encourage Christian discipline because he was concerned about the eternal welfare of souls for whom Jesus died.

Spangenberg recognized the importance of personal discipline. In his description of the pastoral ministry he recognized the temptations of the office. Personal discipline is necessary to avoid those temptations. As the essayist informs us, "Spangenberg admonished the clergy among his readers that preachers should act in such a way that their lives teach their hearers and do not bring contempt upon themselves. They will receive a good deal of contempt without earning it in their office, he warned." Few things cause as much spiritual harm as when called workers disgrace their office by falling to temptation.

Concern for personal discipline also shows in his suggestions for the study of Scripture. Dr. Kolb writes, "To be certain of the message the preacher, however, must study the Scriptures and be faithful to them. Therefore, Spangenberg insisted that those who proclaim God's word must engage in regular Bible study in the original languages." Spangenberg also learned from Luther that *oratio, meditatio et tentatio faciunt theologum* (Prayer, meditation and trial make the theologian). The words of Luther and Spangenberg provide an antidote to modern "fast food" approaches to education. There is no quick and easy way to become a theologian. There are no shortcuts in sound theological training.

Spangenberg lived in an age of confessionalism. People were willing to proclaim God's truth clearly and without apologies. Every teaching of Scripture was important to them because it was God's truth. Spangenberg had learned from Lutheran intolerance of false

doctrine. Luther and his followers loved God's Word and they loved God's people too much to compromise with error. Spangenberg himself knew the importance of staunch confession even if it meant suffering

We live in an age dominated by subjectivism, relativism and compromise in the name of ecumenism. Our modern society denies that there is anything like absolute truth. That is one of the main reasons our society seems to be so chaotic. Just as nature abhors a vacuum in physics, it also abhors a vacuum in things spiritual. People are looking for truth because they need a source of stability in their lives. We who know the truth have a golden opportunity. Lutheranism is nothing unless it is confessional. As we move into the 21st century we need pastors, teachers and laymen who are not ashamed to be confessional Lutherans. We need pastors, teachers and laymen who are not ashamed to confess their Savior and to confess his truth.

Yet the tragic flaw in Spangenberg was that in his zeal to defend the truth he crossed over into error. In his zeal to combat any and every thought of synergism he joined Flacius in saying more than the Scriptures do. Flacius taught that original sin is the very essence of a human being. If original sin is the very essence of a human being, then Adam and Eve were not really human before the fall nor will we be truly human when we are taken to heaven where we will be free from sin and all of sin's consequences. If Flacius was right, then Jesus was not truly human because he was free from original sin. In doctrinal disputes we have to be careful so that the way we reject one error doesn't lead us into another.

It was in the heat of debate that the synergist, Strigel, was able to maneuver Flacius into his overstatement. To his credit Spangenberg later encouraged Flacius to modify his language and use different terms. Flacius heeded his advice, but chose an expression which was merely another way of repeating his error. To his discredit Spangenberg remained a supporter of the Flacian error until the day he died. (Cf. Bente, Historical Introduction, *Concordia Triglotta*, p.

148, 150-151)

Neither Flacius nor Spangenberg were willing to accept instruction or correction in this matter. Every theologian needs to guard against the sin of pride which stubbornly holds to an expression when others have demonstrated from Scripture that it is wrong or misleading. We could also question other statements of Spangenberg. In his sermon on Titus 1:6-10 he went too far in saying that not only polygamy, but also celibacy is improper for the pastor (Lecture III, p. 4). It is also an overstatement to say that Paul in Romans 12:16,17 is admonishing people to remain in their calling (Lecture III, p. 9). It would be more accurate to say that Paul in his first letter to Timothy prohibits women from exercising authority over men in general rather than to say that he is prohibiting women in the pastorate (Lecture III, p. 7). The latter is a logical application of the former.

We can learn much for today from the study of the late-Reformation era. I therefore thank Bethany once again for making this presentation possible. I also thank Dr. Kolb for his informative and well-researched lectures. Dr. Kolb's previous essays and publications have made important contributions to the study of this era. I look forward with eagerness to his future efforts.

Reaction

By: Prof. Juul Madson

These 1993 Reformation Lectures by Dr. Kolb have been **interesting, instructive, and edifying**. I therefore appreciatively add my thanks to those which have already been expressed to the lecturer.

First of all the lectures have been **interesting** especially, because they have shown us Luther's influence in Biblical study through the work of a younger contemporary, to whose work we have generally not been privy, for, as far as I know, his works are not available in our native tongue. Secondly the lectures have been **instructive**, because they have reviewed for us, almost in the manner of a catechism, some of the important doctrines of Scripture as taught by Dr. Luther and reechoed by his grateful student. And, finally, they have been **edifying**, because, in the words which Luther himself has made famous, they "treiben Christum," *i.e.*, they urge or promote Christ as the only ground of salvation and the only foundation of the church — yes, and only comfort to struggling sinners.

When the committee was arranging for these 1993 lectures, its members had in mind some presentation that would focus on Luther's biblical hermeneutics. While Dr. Kolb has in his presentation shown that Cyriakus Spangenberg was influenced in his hermeneutical endeavors also by other leaders of the Lutheran Reformation, he has quite convincingly demonstrated that this one-time pastor at Mansfeld has Dr. Luther for his **chief** mentor.

Martin Luther was the recipient of many gifts from God. Not least among them was the gift of interpreting the Holy Scriptures. While this servant of God can be, and has been, characterized as a great leader, a great preacher, or a great teacher — or all of these, and more — we should not forget that basic to his success in all these departments was the fact that God had made him a **genuine biblical hermeneut**, *i.e.*, a faithful interpreter of the Holy Scriptures.

For the sake especially of whatever college students may still be in the assembly at this hour we define two terms which have appeared in the lectures. **Hermeneutics** is a term that designates the **art** or **science** of interpretation, while **exegesis** is the **practice** of the science or art of hermeneutics, that is, the actual interpretation of a concrete passage according to the principles of interpretation.

In a sense it can be said that every one is engaged in hermeneutics, whether he knows it or not; that is, every one seeks to come to some understanding of that which he hears or reads. While many are satisfied with approaching this task in the spirit of "What does this mean to me?" a true hermeneut or exegete is concerned with the question of "What did, or does, the **author** of this message mean in what he said?"

The need for hermeneuts, exegetes, and expositors who can understand and correctly set forth what has been written for our learning in earlier times, under different circumstances, and in different languages, becomes self-evident when one hears or reads of some of the fanciful concoctions that have been brewed by novices who manipulate the words of the Scriptures to serve their own devices, even as Peter says regarding the letters of Paul, that "ignorant and unstable people distort [them], as they do the other Scriptures, to their own destruction" (2Pe 3:16).

One of my prize accounts of such perversions, which you may likely be able to top with other instances, appeared in the October 24, 1977, issue of *Time Magazine*. Morarji Desai was still a very vigorous prime minister of India at the age of 81. When a reporter queried him concerning the secret of his youthful vigor, Desai, besides producing the expected reference to a chiefly vegetarian diet, startled the reporter by adding that each morning for at least the previous five years he had drunk a glass of his own urine. "It is very good for you," he said. Of **special interest** to me was the fact that he enlisted the Bible in support of this practice saying, "The Bible says, 'Drink from your own cistern!' What is your own cistern? It is your own urine. Urine is the water of life." While at least three passages in the Old

Testament speak of drinking from one's own cistern, the most likely reference in the mind of the prime minister would have been Proverbs 5:15, where it would take more than a consummate allegorizer to produce the interpretation espoused by Desai.

When one in his hermeneutical pursuit is dealing with the very words of God himself, the stakes are immeasurably higher than if one were dealing only with the Dow-Jones report. One should, then, in handling the Word of God approach the task with the awe with which Moses was filled when the voice came to him at the burning bush: "Take your shoes from off your feet, for the place on which you are standing is holy ground" (Exo 3:5).

With that recognition of the place where he was standing, Martin Luther readily learned to repeat the words of young Samuel: "Speak, Lord, your servant is listening" (1Sa 3:10). And only because that word had spoken clearly to Luther could he stake his very life on it and declare even as early as at Worms: "Since, then, your majesty [the emperor] and your lordships desire a simple reply, I will answer without horns and without teeth. Unless I am (convicted) by Scripture and plain reason — I do not accept the authority of popes and councils, for they have contradicted each other — **my conscience is captive to the Word of God.** I cannot and will not recant anything, for to go against conscience is neither right nor safe. Here I stand. I cannot do otherwise. God help me. Amen."

Dr. Kolb has pointed out that in his development as a hermeneut, and exegete, and expositor, Luther had to break with the allegorical method of interpretation of his time. Luther himself refers to this on many occasions, but one of his better excursions occurs in the middle of his commentary on Genesis 9 (in the account of the flood). I quote at some length:

It remains for us to say something about the allegorical meaning, although I have often asserted that I have no great delight in allegories. Nevertheless, I was so enchanted by them in my youth that under the influence of the examples of Origen and Jerome, whom I admired as the greatest theologians, I

thought everything had to be turned into allegories. But while I was following their examples, I finally realized that to my own great harm I had followed an empty shadow and had left unconsidered the heart and core of the Scriptures. Later on, therefore, I began to have a dislike for allegories.

Then, after pointing an accusing finger at the Anabaptists for the excessive zeal for allegory Luther adds:

Truly, he who fabricates allegories without discrimination, or follows such as are fabricated by others, is not only deceived but also most seriously harmed Hence, allegories either must be avoided entirely or must be attempted with the utmost discrimination and brought into harmony with the rule in use by the Apostles.

Relenting slightly at this point the Reformer continues:

Yet these remarks must not be understood to mean that we condemn all allegories indiscriminately, for we observe that both Christ and the Apostles occasionally employed them. But they are such as are conformable to the faith, in accordance with the rule of Paul, who enjoins in Romans 12:6 that prophecy or doctrine should be conformable to the faith.

When we condemn allegories we are speaking of those that are fabricated by one's own intellect and ingenuity, without the authority of Scripture. The others [the acceptable allegories], which are made to agree with the analogy of faith, not only embellish doctrine but also give comfort to consciences (*LW*, 2, 150ff).

Luther next refers to 1 Peter 3:21f (baptism / flood), John 3:14 (serpent in the wilderness / Christ) and 1 Corinthians 10:4 (fathers drinking from the supernatural rock that followed them), and then explains, "These allegories are such that they not only agree nicely with the subject matter but also instruct hearts about faith and are profitable to the conscience."

During his difficult life as a faithful steward of God **and His Word**, Luther had to contend with exegetical errors from every side,

in particular from papal quarters and reformed quarters. In his exposition of Genesis 3:15 he attacks the exegesis that finds the Virgin Mary as the one through whom the serpent's head is to be crushed. There is plenty of attestation to Luther's continued high respect for the Virgin, but he knew where to draw the line. He said,

Therefore let us thank God that now we have also this passage unimpaired and restored. We do not want to take away from Mary any honor which is her due; but we want to remove the idolatry contained in the statement that by giving birth to Christ Mary has destroyed all the power of Satan. ... [The high honor accorded to her by God] must not be permitted to deprive her son of the glory of our redemption and deliverance (*LW*, 1, 192).

Martin Luther's finest exegetical and interpretive efforts may well be found in his numerous writing on the Lord's Supper, where he defended the true Scriptural doctrine of this sacrament against all perverters of the same, for which we owe the Lord and his chosen servant Martin undying thanks.

While the excerpts from Cyriakus Spangenberg's writings presented in these lectures have not dealt specifically with the two above mentioned matters, what we have been presented from the work of this noble disciple of Luther has led us again to thank God for the work of countless such confessors — work that goes largely unnoticed. May the Lord strengthen and comfort us for our confessional task through this timely and delightful visit with "Cy" Spangenberg.